"They Draw but What They See, Know Not the Heart"[1]
Positive Deception in Shakespeare's Comedies

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[1] Shakespeare, *Sonnet 24*

Introduction:
Fundamentally Shakespearean Deceptions

Fiction by definition forces us to suspend disbelief, "surrender ourselves to the story and accept its conventions," and the conventions that works of fiction use to create their stories are a principal demarcation of genre (Frye, *A Natural Perspective*, 10). The late 16th century and early 17th, when Shakespeare was writing, was a dynamic period in the development of English drama. Audiences "demanded new, varied, and sensational plots, accompanied by vaudeville clownery and songs," and skilled writers and actors used appeals to a broad set of typical story structures to create more and more fantastical and moving plays in response (Bevington xxxvii). Shakespeare, who was a successful and well-renowned dramatist in his time and is now regarded as the exemplar of Elizabethan drama, used many of these tropes in their most sensational and varied forms in his works. While Shakespearean drama has overarching conventions such as dialogue in blank verse or prose, all-male acting troupes, and above all antithesis, which is the placing together of two opposing elements, be they concepts, characters, or phrases, several conventions are strongly associated with either comedy or tragedy, and control much of what happens in stories that fall in these genres. The landmark critic Northrop Frye provides an experienced view of these comic and tragic conventions, and their similarities and dissimilarities. He says that tragedy is considered believable in terms of "lifelike characterization, incidents close enough to actual experience to be imaginatively credible, and … 'high seriousness' in theme" (Frye, *A Natural Perspective*, 2). The claim here is that the supernatural or fantastical elements found in tragedies, like ghosts or prophecies, interface with characters that exhibit recognizable and relatable human emotions, thoughts, and perspectives. Thereby, tragic plays maintain a realistic portrayal of people despite containing some nonrealistic components.

Conversely, comedies are generally thought to portray somewhat normal human social situations; the emphasis is generally on friendship, witty conversation, and marriage, social situations most people will experience and understand through their lifetime, in contrast to the kingly worries and forbidden acts found in tragedies. However, Shakespeare's comedic social situations are often "stylized and artificial to a very marked degree" in terms of plot, plot devices, and modes of character interaction, always necessitating "something incredible [such as] fairies or magical forests or identical twins," or even folkloric plot elements that "may force [Shakespeare's characters] to do quite unreasonable things" which naturally gives actors that attempt to realize those characters some challenges (Frye, *A Natural Perspective*, 3). The incredible actions that characters make in Shakespeare's plots are generally of a few types. In a typical comedy, many of these are some form of deception, whether a somehow impenetrable disguise such as Rosalind uses in *As You Like It*, a tangle of lies like those Don Pedro and Don John unfold in *Much Ado about Nothing*, or an elaborate forged letter like the one Maria leaves for Malvolio in *Twelfth Night*. These manipulations of the truth often allow Shakespeare's characters a critique of stale social mores, an opportunity for personal growth, or even the trust of a potential romantic partner who had been hesitant, misogynistic, or otherwise not prepared for marital bliss. In fact, this is much more often the case than not; the comedies generally end happily for all but a very few. For the ever-after majority, the major deceptions of the play cause events and create situations that benefit them. I argue that these deceptions are what develop Shakespeare's comedies thematically and progress the plot by introducing an opportunity for antithetical comparisons. In doing so characters are somehow pushed to reevaluate their stereotypes, desires, and capacity for understanding others. Put simply: successful deception entails a subversion of someone's expectations, subverting someone's expectations refutes their

beliefs, and since comedic deception subverts expectations based on flawed or overly simplistic beliefs about the world, it forces characters to reconsider these beliefs in the light of real experience.

This situation plays itself out over and over in the comedies, but it does seem particularly unbelievable for falsehoods to yield such benefit. One would expect liars to not be trusted, to obfuscate methods to solve their problems and the play's problems as well as the truth, or at the very least make others want to punish them. Take, for example, one of Shakespeare's most famous deceptions: the case of Hamlet's madness. Through the play, "Polonius spies on him; Claudius spies on him; Rosencrantz and Guildenstern spy on him," and because he is compelled to continually delay his vengeance on Claudius, he deflects their attempts to see his true mind by "[putting] an antic disposition on" (Frye, *On Shakespeare*, 94; Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, I.v.181). He claims, as Stuart Sillars points out in an article of his on lying in Shakespeare, by "the use of the word 'antic' here" that his plan is "a reference to theatrical performance rather than actual mental disturbance," but the line between act and reality blurs: his soliloquies later on display a confusion and emotional anguish that bespeak a serious case of "the student's disease of melancholy" and his actions are accordingly "either delayed, like his revenge on Claudius, or hasty and rash, like his killing of Polonius" (Sillars 26; Frye, *On Shakespeare*, 89). Hamlet's story concludes with his death, and the deaths of nearly everyone else in the play. But this is something we knew before anyone asks us "Who's there?" on the ramparts (Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, I.i.1). *Hamlet* is a tragedy, and tragedies confront failure and end in death. Frye may claim tragedies have a better sense of realism, but they are subject to their genre's tropes and typical plot structures as well. Misinformation, just like any other action, statement, or situation, has a high probability of harming the main characters in any sort of tragedy.

Comedy, on the other hand, portrays an opposing situation, and Shakespeare's comedy intrinsically involves an initial period of confusion and a final revelation of information. Shakespeare refined a comedic formula "developed in the hands of Lyly, Peele, and Greene," using their ideas as well as Classical ideas about drama to "realize on a broad scale the possibilities of the comic point of view in the representation of human life and character" (Bevington xxxix, xli). The resultant typical comic plot had these three parts: "a first part in which an absurd, unpleasant or irrational situation is set up; a second part of confused identity and personal complications; [and] a third part in which the plot gives a shake and a twist and everything comes right in the end" (Frye, *On Shakespeare*, 38). Since this structure requires confusion, it requires a conflict of information, and that requires some method of distortion. For the purpose, Shakespeare chooses to utilize intentional deception more than unintentional deception, as Jack Vaughn points out in *Shakespeare's Comedies*, his summary work on these plays: while *The Comedy of Errors*, one of Shakespeare's first, "is utterly free from deception…and no character is aware of the truth," but "in every case" of mistaken identity in the comedies to come, "there is either an element of deliberate deception at work or at least an awareness by one or more of the characters of the true situation" (Vaughn 13). Surprisingly, many of these incidents, which I will explore in detail later, are not malevolently intended in the least part.

A character's intentions are a vital part of explaining their actions in Shakespearean drama, especially when they contrast with their actions. To use the informative example of Hamlet's broad and multifaceted experience with deception again, he tellingly proclaims his intentions behind staging an idiosyncratically Shakespearean play-within-a-play – to "play something like the murder of [his] father/Before mine uncle" to make Claudius visibly

uncomfortable and thereby betray his guilt – only after a long rant wherein he repeatedly expresses a seemingly wholehearted belief that he "should ha' fatted all the region kites/With this slave's offal" long before now (Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, 596-7, 579-80). Shakespeare mixes the intention behind Hamlet's actions and a contrasting expression of belief to display Hamlet's central confusion and imply his inability to bring his vengeance into action. A more brief, pitiful, and immediately tragic statement which characterizes its speaker is Romeo's useless statement: "I thought all for the best," given as a response when his attempts to break up a fight between his enemy Tybalt and his friend Mercutio give Tybalt a chance to fatally stab Mercutio (Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet*, III.i.103). Saying this, Romeo reestablishes himself as someone who means well yet encounters ills by chance. By analyzing their intentions, I was able to comprehend much about their personality and the play's character as well.

These are tragic examples; in the comedies, the tune is more upbeat. *A Midsummer Night's Dream* offers a rich example. Oberon tells Puck to look for the "disdainful youth" who can easily be discerned "by the Athenian garments he hath on," assuming that will be enough description for identifying someone in the forest next to Athens (Shakespeare, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, II.i.261, 264). Oberon's actions in this scene, his first in the play, are consequential to his character, but the way he goes about them tells us much about who he is. He assumes he knows the whole story, and acts to help Helena, whose spurned desire for Demetrius recalls his own conflict with Titania over the Indian boy he wants from her. His solution for her problem is the same as that for his: magic. The same goes for Puck: he follows his master's instructions, and is delighted with the chaos that ensues when he drugs Lysander instead of Demetrius – but this delight does not stand in the way of the lovers' eventual happiness, it only means a little more fun for him until, because of his actions, "all shall be well" (Shakespeare, *A*

Midsummer Night's Dream, III.ii.463-4). It is Puck's approach to his tricks – not to harm, but only to confuse for a while – that makes *Midsummer* so emblematic of Shakespeare's comedies. Their actions lead away from their intentions, but only for a while, as comic convention dictates.

Statements alone can display an incongruity between intention and meaning as well. For a particularly relevant example, examine Jacques' "All the world's a stage" speech, delivered while Orlando goes to return with the faint Adam (Shakespeare, *As You Like It*, II.vii.138). Beginning with that famous quote which obviously means to outline the human experience in general, he begins with one line for "the infant,/Mewling and puking in the nurse's arms," with nothing to say of the innocent happy childhood praised by many of Shakespeare's other characters (Shakespeare, *As You Like It*, II.vii.143). He then breezes through the life of an upper class Elizabethan man to arrive and meditate for nearly a third of the speech on the pains and sadness of the end of life:

> His youthful hose, well saved, a world too wide
> For his shrunk shank, and his big manly voice,
> Turning again toward childish treble, pipes
> And whistles in his sound. Last scene of all,
> That ends this strange eventful history,
> Is second childishness and mere oblivion,
> Sans teeth, sans eyes, sans taste, sans everything.
> (Shakespeare, *As You Like It*, II.vii.143, 165)

Two major fixations shape Jaques' depiction of life as specified from the entire world he invokes at the beginning of the monologue: his focus on the melancholy parts of life and his focus on the male experience. Furthermore, as Agnes Latham writes in an introduction to the play, "the whole

atmosphere of the play contradicts it" as just another melancholic turn of phrase from the ever-predictably melancholic Jaques (Latham lxxvi). But as we have seen, the relationship between intention and meaning or outcome is a complicated one in Shakespeare's works. This discussion intrinsically applies to deception, in that comedic deceptions, which are not always meant well, almost always end to benefit the main characters.

Shakespeare has characters talking in general terms about their own biases, assumptions, and cognitive dissonances often, but he uses this technique in another work, which coincidentally deals with relationships and ideas similar to those in the comedies – the sonnets. Sonnets in general derive thematically and structurally from Petrarch's sequence, which "idealized [Petrarch's love Laura] into the unapproachable lady worshipped by the self-abasing and miserable lover," but Elizabethan, or Shakespearean, poets wrote sonnets which acted as a "rejection of the stereotyped attitudes and relationships that had come to dominate the typical Petrarchan sonnet sequence" to foster "a new insistence on lifelike emotion in art" (Bevington 1662). In Shakespeare's sonnets, ideas from Petrarchan conventions remain strongly expressed but are phrased in a way that "demonstrates how the kin of madmen and poets vainly flourish their wit as a deflection of tension, sexual and otherwise, and an assertion of power," according to Heather Dubrow in a book on Shakespeare's poetry (Dubrow, *Captive Victors*, 204). The same concept will carry through to the plays as well. The sonnets offer us a unique perspective on the same ideas about love, friendship, confusion, and deceit he draws from in his comedies. In fact, during Shakespeare's lifetime, his plays were not often officially made available to the public in written form, as doing so would enable other troupes to perform them or more easily use material from them. We know of several definitively or potentially authorized quartos which Shakespeare's company put out, presumably "based generally on Shakespeare's own drafts or on

transcripts of them," and many more unauthorized editions written from the testimony of actors, audience members, or some combination of the two (Bevington lxxxvii). However, the primary way Elizabethans witnessed these plays was on the stage. What he was famous for on the page were the poems he published: *The Rape of Lucrece*, *Venus and Adonis*, and *The Phoenix and Turtle*. Yet it is the sonnets, which were only published late in Shakespeare's life, that garner almost all of the attention we give to Shakespeare's non-dramatic work. Indeed, Shakespeare's sonnets are considered some of the world's most treasured and well-known poetical works. While "the typical Elizabethan sonnet sequence offers a thematically connected series of lyrical meditations" "rather than telling a chronological story," we are presented with the sonnets in a specific order, and they make enough sense in that order that there has been a tendency to plot them accordingly (Bevington 1662). By supposing a narrative, sometimes an autobiographical one at that, "four figures: the poet-speaker himself, his friend, his mistress, and a rival poet," are put into a "tangled relationship" which the speaker explores in a very consistent thematic register juxtaposing "devouring Time" with all beauty, skill, and liveliness; "the exultation of friendship over love" with "attachment to the rebellious flesh;" and above all, the idealized male friend with his mistress, whom he names a "female evil" (Bevington, 1662, 1663, Shakespeare, *Sonnet 144*).

Shakespeare's sonnets and comedies both share a foremost concern with romantic and social relationships characterized through "the mediation of formal conventions" (Dubrow, *Captive Victors*, 170). The characters enact these conventions through idealization, paranoia, and above all confusion, as well as a deft and typically Shakespearean use of antithesis, and a solid understanding of the Elizabethan psyche. Yet similarities seem to lose their steam as regards "narrative elements…[because] several of the characteristics central to other dramatic and narrative poetry, including other Renaissance sonnet sequences, are signally absent from" his

sonnets (Dubrow, *Captive Victors*, 172). He does not narrate in his poems, unlike many other sonneteers; instead, the "sonnets embody the tensions of conflicting forces [which are] more often internalized within the speaker than dramatized as characters," and yet there do seem to be definitive characters (Dubrov, *Captive Victors*, 179). The general consensus is that "most of the first 126 sonnets appear to be addressed in warm friendship to a handsome young aristocrat, whereas sonnets 127-152 speak of the poet's dark-haired mistress" with the topic most often being their relationships (Bevington 1660). Firstly, the speaker and a male friend, who enjoy a homosocial relationship the speaker idealizes through several complications, and secondly, the speaker and a mistress who fills the speaker with alternating sensations of desire, shame, and other turbulent feelings. This depiction of the sonnets has remained generally in critical favor despite arguments that the sonnets "lack the narrative continuity generally associated with" being grouped into two sequences, are not necessarily meant by Shakespeare to be read in the typical order, and "deflect erotic interpretations by concealing gender" (Dubrow, *Incertainties*, 292). Such arguments, as well as others about a "gendering of evil" by the plot, and attempts to determine the historical identities of the Friend and Lady and pin each sonnet to them, provide enough reason to feel as if one is assuming too much (Dubrow, *Incertainties*, 305). Even so, while Shakespeare consistently "bases his sonnets on mere traces of events," we feel that since "he alone among the major Elizabethan sonneteers wrote for the stage" that some aspect of narrative structure past characterization would remain. But remember: Shakespeare does not primarily narrate in his plays; he writes in either conversation between two or more characters, or soliloquy, which works like a reflexive conversation, and "immediately presents itself as a parallel to and an inspiration for Shakespeare's unique approach to the sonnets" (Dubrov, *Captive Victors*, 181). A sonnet performed as one would a soliloquy provides room for

interpretation of intention, direction, and meaning, in a similar way that one would have with a soliloquy. Shakespeare's dramatic conventions, applied to poetry here, negate any need for temporal and situational context, and instead exist as "occasion for meditative reflection" upon a supposed event, rather than on the event itself (Bevington 1662).

The many conventions that Shakespeare's sonnets and comedies used in common result in several shared themes. First of all, they share a deep concern with "the structure of the continuum of male homosocial desire," and how it fits into a "pattern of male friendship, mentorship, entitlement, rivalry, and hetero- and homo- sexuality" that in Shakespeare's world finds its formation in the homosocial, a term coined by Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick to describe a very close sort of male friendship that involves elements of desire, self-identification with the friend, and other signs of affection and concern (Sedgwick 1). A standard Shakespearean comedic text, with some important variation, typically begins with groups of same-gendered friends whose closeness and modes of social bonding are important to how the audience perceives these characters, and because of how these relationships conflict with the developing heterosexual relationships. Likewise, the sonnets begin with many expressions of homosocial affection, as they are typically arranged. This brings us to the next similarity: sexual tension and conflict between men and women, which is as epitomized by Shakespeare's quarrelling couples as it is by the antithetical professions of love, hate, and other confused and erotically charged emotions the latter sonnets make, explicitly or according to the traditional sonnet plotted readings, toward a 'Dark Lady' who at first refuses, then accepts, then again refuses his advances, despite her marriage to a familiar Friend. The speaker claims "[his] love is as a fever, longing still/For that which longer nurses the disease," characterizing his mistress as encouraging disease, and then two sonnets in the sequence afterwards protests, presumably to this supposed

mistress, thus: “Canst thou, O cruel, say I love thee not/When I against myself with thee partake?” (Shakespeare, *Sonnet 147*, *Sonnet 149*). Clearly, he is mixed up about his feelings if there is supposed to be some semblance of continuity, but what is more important here is the thematic continuity, which is strengthened by these conflicting statements of the speaker’s feelings. Antithesis is just a comparison of opposites, after all, and Shakespeare does so in the sonnets as often as he does in his play.

This cognitive dissonance that a common speaker of these poems would experience because of these antitheses can be best characterized as a sort of self-deception, due to its persistence. The “two loves [he has], of comfort and despair” are consistently described through “a distribution of traits between a man and a woman in which the woman finds grouped with her femaleness an overwhelmingly, eschatologically negative moral evaluation, a monopoly on initiative, desire, and power, and a…connection between the negative moral valuation and the negative (concave) space,” whereas the “male who is paired with/against this female has, at the most, one trait…and no energy” (Shakespeare, *Sonnet 144*; Sedgwick 32). These are constructions; the sonnets themselves make this clear, and not just by obvious statements meant to make a point, such as “Those lines that I before have writ do lie” (Shakespeare, *Sonnet 115*). On the one hand, the speaker claims to be “patience-tame to sufferance [and would] bide each check” that the male friend gives him “without accusing [him] of injury,” and even claims that he “mak’st faults graces that to [him] resort” (Shakespeare, *Sonnet 56*, *Sonnet 96*). On the other hand, he “[does] not love” the female character “with [his] eyes,/For they in [her] a thousand errors note/But ‘tis [his] heart that loves what they despise” (Shakespeare, *Sonnet 141*). The sonnets depict “[his] eye and heart…at a mortal war” with no conclusion or resolution save that found within “Time’s…bending sickle’s compass” (Shakespeare, *Sonnet 46*, *Sonnet 116*).

However, with the addition of plot, staging, and definitive characters, there is hope for a resolution of some sort, one which we will see played out dramatically in the comedies (Shakespeare, *Sonnet 46*)

One of Shakespeare's first plays, *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, which "Shakespeare wrote at approximately the same time" as his sonnets, is a good place to start. Its main characters resemble the speaker, Friend, and Lady well enough to be discerned easily, yet not so well that the comparison becomes so simple as to be dull or so exact as to be redundant (Vaughn 38). Additionally, as Jeffrey Masten says in his informative essay on the play, it "constantly appears to place same-sex and cross-sex relationships in direct competition," while "the play's use of the same rhetoric, the same terminology, for same-sex 'friendship' and cross-sex 'love'" in some measure equivocates such feelings of companionship (Masten 205). In these aspects, it is particularly similar to the thematic content of the sonnets. *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* even finds a confused and conflicted speaker torn between a close male friend and a woman who complicates the male's friendship in Proteus. He starts the play begging his close male friend Valentine, the other gentleman, to stay home with him using an "intense, devotional language of male friendship" which seems to include some note of eroticism (Masten 206). In this scene and onward, he is helpless to persuade Valentine not to leave, refute Valentine's jokes about his love for Julia, or go with Valentine to court in Milan. His continued ineffective objections, as well as his ineffective wordplay with Speed after Valentine leaves, characterize him as a victim. This is further perpetuated when his father decides "that [Proteus] shalt spend some time/With Valentinus at the Emperor's court" in defiance of Proteus' wishes, which he does not even express (Shakespeare, *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, I.iii.66-7). He "feared to show [his] father Julia's letter/Lest he should take exception to [their] love," claiming it was from Valentine and

accidentally making his father think he would rather leave (Shakespeare, *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, I.iii.80-1).

When he gets to Milan, though, he adopts a different mindset. He later falls for Valentine's betrothed, Sylvia, accuses her of cruelty for denying his advances, and most importantly, has several soliloquies wherein he agonizes over his feelings for both his friend Valentine and the object of his desire Sylvia, primarily parallels the speaker of the sonnets. When he meets Sylvia for the first time, and converses with Valentine after having not seen him for some time, he questions himself as vigorously as the speaker of the sonnet does, and about the same things, too. He asks, "is it mine eye, or Valentine's praise/Her true perfection, or my false transgression/That makes me, reasonless, to reason" why he "loves [Sylvia] too, too much" and why he feels that "[his] zeal to Valentine is cold" (Shakespeare, *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, II.iv.202, 200). In his two soliloquies in II.iv and II.vi, he speaks alone in a manner strikingly similar to these sonnets. However, he directs almost all of his active verbs towards himself, treating Valentine, Julia, and Sylvia as objects that have certain qualities and influence him; if he decides to "[aim] at Sylvia as a sweeter friend," "forget that Julia is alive," and "hold [Valentine] an enemy," he "shall…be forsworn," but if he "can check [his] erring love," he "needs must lose [himself]" and again be forsworn (Shakespeare, *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, II.vi.30, 27, 29, II.iv.210, II.vi.20). Of course, unlike the sonnets, he must decide, and he chooses to pursue Sylvia. His plan entails that he assumes an air of innocence for revealing Valentine and Sylvia's plan to elope, or more broadly, that he intends to deceive his best friend and his girlfriend. But he also deceives himself. The structure of his soliloquy is intensely antithetical, so that to choose Sylvia over Julia he must not only validate his current feelings for Sylvia, but also "forget that Julia is alive [and remember] that [his] love to [her] is dead" (Shakespeare, *The Two*

Gentlemen of Verona, II.vi.27-8). Not only does he claim responsibility for his own social fate now, he claims the power to negate the "twenty thousand soul-confirming oaths" he has made in the past (Shakespeare, *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, II.vi.16).

However, when he takes a break from talking to himself to enact his plan, he is back to playing the part of the victim by virtue of his plan, and now it is an outright lie. He has explicitly said he would commit "some treachery used to Valentine" and "blunt Thurio's dull proceedings," and he deceives them well, but does not succeed in his lies to Sylvia (Shakespeare, *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, II.vi.32, 41). Till the bitter end, Proteus claims to Sylvia's face that "[her] heart [is] obdurate" against his "pure heart's truth," when it is really him who is resisting a relationship based on mutual experience and understanding (Shakespeare, *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, IV.ii.116, 85). Even just before he forces himself on Sylvia, he claims that she "cannot love where [she's] beloved" (Shakespeare, *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, V.iv.44). It is only until Valentine intervenes and disgraces him at length that his "shame and guilt [confound him]" and he acknowledges that he has done wrong. Robert Hunter notes in his work on forgiveness in Shakespeare that this climax "[sets] up the theme of friendship alongside that of romantic love [and makes Proteus] an offender against both ideals" (Hunter 87). He is again given traits similar to the speaker in the sonnets, yet since this takes place in a play, a resolution needs to occur, and the Christian tenet that "sinful man must prove worthy of his own ultimate forgiveness by pardoning those who trespass against him" provides an effective method of bridging to the resolution quickly that would have been well respected by its audience (Hunter 87).

This is no accident; in other plays by Shakespeare, we will see that "Shakespeare associated romantic comedy with the denouement of forgiveness" throughout his career, using it

regularly to provide a resolution for his comedies (Hunter 87). Shakespeare lived in a Christian society, and forgiveness is a Christian value, and therefore valued highly. More specifically, it is a "variety of love which the Bible calls charity," praised in the comedies alongside "the love of man for woman," and the love between friends (Hunter 93). The attempted rape and following discussion in the last scene of *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* displays several ideas about how these different types of love interact with one another. Romantic love is pitted against homosocial love, as has been noted, but "romantic love itself turns out in these plays to be dependent on the virtue of charity," because "the love of man for woman (but not of woman for man) is seen as too frail an emotion to sustain the pressures that are frequently put against it," hence Proteus' cruelty (Hunter 93). Julia forgives him primarily for the sake of their romantic love, even though it does not seem like Proteus has learned a lesson of any sort. Because of Valentine and Julia' virtue of charity, the ill effects of Proteus' lies are negated.

Valentine displaying charity here is but one last example of his shows of virtue throughout the play. In the opening scene, Valentine colors Proteus' obsessive love for Julia as excessive, and his own attitude towards love as prudent, countering Proteus' love for Julia, but he spends little time denigrating love as his name might suggest. He renounces his former attitude towards love when he meets Sylvia. In fact, he himself is now criticized for his adoration by his own servant, Speed. Speed notes that ever since he fell in love, he is prone "to relish a love song, like a robin redbreast; to walk alone, like one that had the pestilence; to sigh, like a schoolboy that had lost his ABC; to weep, like a young wench that had buried her granddam," and so on, rattling off a list of traits lovers possess (Shakespeare, *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, II.i.19-23). These are "the conventional marks to know a lover by [and are] a stock piece of Elizabethan caricature" (Latham lvii). This supposed description of a lover occurs over and over

in Shakespeare's works, and has its roots in the same thematic register as the Sonnets do. I label this attitude 'Petrarchan' several times through this paper, as a result. A succinct term for this concept which encompasses a number of traits, as the length of Speed's conversation in II.i will show, will come in handy later.

As it turns out, Valentine and Sylvia's relationship has further parallels to the sonnets. She, like the lady in the sonnets, is actively deceptive, although her deception is different than what is found in the sonnets. Instead of confounding Proteus, our analogue to the speaker, she deceives Valentine, tricking him to tell him that she loves him. She asks him to write her a letter to someone she loves, and then gives it back to him, saying: "I care not/And yet take [the letter] again. And yet I thank you/Meaning henceforth to trouble you no more," giving him the letter and no straightforward explanation (Shakespeare, *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, II.i.113-4). Valentine interprets this to mean she did not like the letter, but Speed informs him she obviously intended it for him. And so, Valentine is deceived for his own happiness: from then on, the two are the most faithful of lovers. This intentionally benevolent type of deception, as I have noted, is a hallmark feature of the comedies.

There is another of these benevolent deceptions committed by one more character who is vital to the conception of much of Shakespeare's comedy after *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*: Julia, "the first cross-dressing, male-initiative-seizing heroine of Shakespeare's writing career" (Masten 216). She, in cross-dressing as a man, gains the opportunity to learn about Proteus without him being aware of it by attending on him as a servant for the latter portion of the play. When she reveals her identity at the end of the play, Proteus finally accepts that "inconstancy falls off where it begins," denouncing his former claims to Sylvia as the work of his inconstancy, not his reason (Shakespeare, *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, V.iv.113). She first dons it to

"prevent/The loose encounters of lascivious men" while she is on her way to Milan to visit Proteus, but soon falls under his employment to aide his efforts in winning Sylvia (Shakespeare, *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, II.vii.40-1). While she follows his orders, she gently protests his devotion to Sylvia, and when her disguise is lifted, Proteus has all the more reason to feel ashamed of himself. Proteus, however, has broken vows, and must seek atonement. He is shamed into doing so in the last scene, whether sincerely or not. The question of sincerity in general is not always strongly answered in Shakespeare's plays. This makes sense; in reference to my experience acting in productions of Shakespeare plays and in general, the work of acting is in taking a text and physicalizing it, and doing so in a way that makes the characters look real and the action believable. Actors are what make plays believable in general, so this is no great surprise. When I played Valentine during Shakespeare at Winedale's 2016 Spring Class production of *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, I got to see and experience this phenomenon firsthand. In the scene where Sylvia gives Valentine the letter he wrote for her, for instance, I had to act as if I did not know her meaning, and while it certainly took forethought on my part, it came naturally in context.

The role of the actor in these deception scenes was vital, as they all "depend on a single larger duality and untruth…that the figures moving before them were actors in assumed roles, rather than the actual characters as which…they are still widely regarded" (Sillars 33). Acting at the time had an interesting and complex relationship with the law. One important reason was that it was one of the few instances someone of a lower class was allowed to impersonate a member of the upper class in dress, "as the sumptuary laws made clear," and because of this, the act of portraying a character was itself associated with deception (Sillars 33). In addition to the rich history of dramatic deception Shakespeare drew from, this aspect of Elizabethan dramatic culture

allowed his "plays [to] rest firmly on the deceits of rhetoric, performance and disguise [as a] constant and richly suggestive enactment of the art of lying" (Sillars 34). It is obvious that Shakespeare's plays were written to be performed, not read. Comedies are highly conventionalized works, as I have said, and "one normally rejects a convention by saying that the individual works which belong to it are all alike" (Frye, *A Natural Perspective*, 5). Actors express nuances in the text that distinguish it from other plays and grant each one its own context, and much of their work is meant to make characters seem natural, legitimate, or otherwise believable. Insofar as deceptions are concerned, Shakespeare wrote to an audience that, because of acting's relationship to lying, they could have seen "the figures on the stage as both actors and as the people they presented," so his deceptions would naturally rely on how the scenes are acted (Sillars 34). To acknowledge this principle, and take advantage of my experiences, I will make mention of my performance experience throughout.

This discussion of lying in performance naturally extends to Julia's deception, who is in costume as another character, while already being an actor in a costume. I have played two characters in Shakespearean comedies who have to be forgiven of similar, though not as severe, offences for the comic plot to resolve, and both experiences were a challenge for me. To pull off a comic production with such characters, one must act as if the offender deserves forgiveness, and deceptions allow us to rationalize the offender's actions. Julia states at the end that "it is the lesser blot, modesty finds/Women to change their shapes than men their minds" but not only is her deception a "lesser blot," it is what finally drives Proteus to admit he has been wrong (Shakespeare, *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, V.iv.108-9). The connection of female deception to male acceptance of failure extends through the comedies on into the romances, and even finds

its place in tragedies and histories, and provides a useful way to explain Claudio publically shaming Hero and then getting married to her, for instance.

Deceptions that fit this mold and all the others described so far are found in all of Shakespeare's comedies, but I will continue my analysis by focusing on three plays: *Twelfth Night*, *Much Ado about Nothing*, and *As You Like It*. I have acted as Claudio in *Much Ado* and Orsino in *Twelfth Night*, and have learned from that experience and through study that these plays are good examples of Shakespearean comic conventions, many of which we have seen rephrased in the Sonnets and staged in *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*. As we shall find, comedies use many types of elaborate deceptions to get men, primarily of the Petrarchan lover type, to realize their mistakes and misunderstandings, and "disentangling the levels of dissimulation is not easy" (Sillars 26). Deception was closely involved with every part of Shakespearean comedy, but a basic principle remains the same in all three of the texts I will analyze in detail, as well as generally: many of these deceptions act as means, explicitly or implicitly, by which the deceived party is edified somehow, and this allows the comic plot to proceed.

Chapter One
Much Ado about Nothing: "Here's Our Own Hands against Our Hearts"[2]

Like *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, characters in *Much Ado about Nothing* utilize lies malevolently and beneficially, but then the plot resolves with a negation of those wrongs. Here, the anticomic sentiment of *Much Ado* finds embodiment in Don John, a "plain dealing villain" who "gnashes his iron tusks at the spectacle of human happiness" that pervades the atmosphere of *Much Ado*, rather than solely through the attitudes of its central characters (Shakespeare, *Much Ado about Nothing*, I.iii.30; Hunter 94). The central male characters, Don Pedro, Claudio, and Benedick, are military men returning from war, newcomers into the comic world of Messina, and when their cohort is welcomed in by Leonato, Hero, Beatrice, and the other citizens, soon everyone begins planning marriages, laying plots, or just preparing for the masque. Claudio reveals his love for Hero, the daughter of the Messinian governor Leonato, in the first scene and Don Pedro moves to woo her for him. Meanwhile, Benedick espouses an anticomic attitude, denouncing marriage and vowing never to trust women, especially not Beatrice, who equals him and more in their frequent verbal sparring matches. Don John begins "the stuff of Italianate intrigue" when he tricks Claudio into thinking Pedro wants to marry her, a lie which is dispelled rather quickly, and then into thinking Hero has slept with someone else before their wedding, a lie which takes the whole rest of the play to dismiss (Vaughn 104). After Don John shows him Margaret being wooed while wearing Hero's clothes, Claudio angrily denounces Hero at their wedding ceremony for her supposed sins. Because Claudio, "as a result of deception or lack of self-knowledge (or both)" has let "hatred [gain] the ascendency within [his] mind," he shocks the whole cast, and creates a problem that concerns each character (Hunter 93). Meanwhile, in the

[2] Shakespeare, *Much Ado about Nothing*, (V.iv.90-1)

other romance plot, Beatrice and Benedick have been duped by Don Pedro, with everyone's help, into thinking that the other loves them. This line of thought comes to a climax at the wedding as well. Once Claudio has stormed off, and the father figures have decided how to best deal with a daughter whose virtue her father holds in doubt, the two argue, establish their mutual love, and most importantly, Beatrice convinces Benedick to challenge Claudio for treating Hero badly. Soon enough though, the truth is out, Claudio is tricked into thinking Hero is dead and forgiven in short time, and then the two couples begin their wedding celebrations. Deceit, as we can see in this brief plot summary, is a central plot device in *Much Ado*. The play's deceptions largely fool Beatrice, Claudio and Benedick. The latter two are members of a male military culture which is held together by honor. That code of honor which binds Don Pedro, Benedick, and Claudio together is a source of many of their problems, because it prompts them to react to perceived injuries to their reputation in a way that attacks other people. At the same time, the deceptions that provoked the most harmful consequences prove to lead to events that help the soldiers and Beatrice transition from their immature homosocial mindset to a more trusting and 'adult' mode of social cohesion, marriage. This play is one of many examples where deception allows for a comic resolution after its spectacle.

From the start, Claudio's relationship with Hero is described partly in terms of how it adds to his honor. When he brings up his desire to marry her to Don Pedro, his first question is "Hath Leonato any son, my lord?" (Shakespeare, *Much Ado about Nothing,* I.i.282). Here, he initially mentions his likelihood to inherit Leonato's respectable fortune rather than his love for Hero. Even if he focuses on the social implications of a marriage to deflect inspection of his feelings for Hero, which he shyly hid in the first part of their conversation, he brings up the subject of honor in the first place, and soon we find everyone concerned with their honor. When

Don Pedro devises a plan to trick Benedick and Beatrice into getting married, which would benefit their own honors insofar as marriage is considered by the Elizabethans to be the beginning of a respectable adulthood and the foundation for a happy adult life, Pedro makes no mention of how the arrangement will be good for them but rather proclaims himself and his companions "the only love gods" (Shakespeare, *Much Ado about Nothing*, II.i.368). Additionally, at the wedding, Pedro explicitly notes that Hero's supposed impurity is a direct insult to his honor because he wooed her for Claudio, claiming that he "stand[s] dishonored, that [had] gone about/To link [his] dear friend to a common stale" (Shakespeare, *Much Ado about Nothing*, IV.i.63-4).

This social cornerstone of self-concern soon becomes a means by which Don John utilizes "villainous machinations" to manipulate Claudio and Pedro (Vaughn 103). When Don John says "That young start-up hath all the glory of my overthrow: if I can cross him any way, I bless myself every way," he establishes his antagonism, the main external conflict in the play, as one played out in the language of honor, and one enacted for the sake of his damaged reputation (Shakespeare, *Much Ado about Nothing,* I.iii.62-4). He takes advantage of a disguised Claudio in II.i by intentionally 'mistaking' him for Benedick, and seemingly communicating his earnest belief about his brother Pedro's honor. He similarly manipulates both Pedro and Claudio in III.ii by claiming Claudio's trust simply by claiming that "it would better fit [his] honor" to listen to him (Shakespeare, *Much Ado about Nothing,* III.ii.109-10). Their concern with their honor becomes a social threat to others when Claudio publically shames Hero at the altar, especially because he had the support of Pedro whose witness ends up overbearing hers.

Benedick's concern with reputation and self-image manifests itself in a staple topic in Early Modern comedy: the fear of being cuckolded. Shakespearean examples of this

phenomenon are numerous, including Othello of the eponymous play, Leontes from *The Winter's Tale*, and Mr. Ford from *Merry Wives of Windsor*. Not only were cuckoldry jokes common, the mindset of the man afraid of marriage provided a good starting point for Shakespeare's comic formula, which generally took the form of a transition from homosocial relationships to marriage. Many of Shakespeare's comedies start with close same-gendered friends, just like Proteus and Valentine in *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, and move on to have them begin to prioritize a new sexual relationship over their established homosocial one. Beatrice shares a similar fear of being disgraced by a man. Her status as an orphan under the care of her uncle gives her a degree of freedom that Hero, who must always do as her father says, conspicuously lacks. Where Claudio is anxious about his social position and imagines even the Prince lying to him in claiming to help him win Hero's heart, and Pedro, being a prince, is self-secure in his reputation, Benedick and Beatrice are somewhere in the middle.

Beatrice and Benedick's anxiety about being betrayed in the pact of marriage manifests itself as a tendency to utilize wit to defend their position, and their excellent wits fare well against most verbal assault. This makes them feel self-secure, but prolongs a "merry war [which] progresses from skirmish to skirmish," seemingly without end (Hunter 94). Their bouts prove to be temporary though, for "such vehement protestations of disaffection…lead in only one direction" in comedy: "the eventual coupling of the two protestors" (Vaughn 107). After just a few battles, and the coupling of Hero and Claudio, "it occurs to Don Pedro that there is a means by which this strife can be resolved into concord through love," which is to trick them (Hunter 94). This deception "removes [their] barrier to love – the fear of not being loved in return," which allows them to "admit their mutual passion" and abandon "their customary masquerade of mutual disdain" in favor of honesty about their feelings for each other (Hunter 94, Vaughn 107).

In the aftermath of another deception, that being Don John's contrivance that Hero is unfaithful which led to Claudio leaving her at the altar, all the other characters gradually leave the stage, providing them the perfect opportunity to voice their true feelings. But their discussion is of course hindered by the prior events. Beatrice must persuade Benedick to put aside his affection for Claudio and denounce him for his actions towards Hero before she can truly entertain his love. Beatrice proclaims Claudio "approved in the height a villain" for having "slandered, scorned, [and] dishonored" Hero, and says she would "eat his heart in the marketplace" if she "were a man" (Shakespeare, *Much Ado about Nothing*, IV.i.300-1, 305). Benedick agrees Hero is not at fault and Claudio is, but does not want to challenge him for his actions, asking Beatrice to "be friends first" before going to such lengths (Shakespeare, *Much Ado about Nothing*, IV.i.296). Only when "he has convinced himself of the justice of Hero's cause" by checking how earnestly Beatrice believes she is innocent does he agree to challenge Claudio, and in doing so shows "his willingness to follow…his instinctive, love-inspired belief in the decency of Beatrice and trusting her instinctive belief" in Hero (Hunter 97). Here, the two show by reacting to dramatic conflict with deep trust for one another that Don Pedro's deceptions have resulted in the comic triumph – romantic love.

The results of Don John's deception, comparatively, seems much further from a typical comic plot, veering almost into tragedy. This happens when Claudio, who "under the influence of his hatred [has devised] as cruel a revenge as possible," interrupts his wedding with Hero to do so, and "[repudiates her] at the altar where they should be married" (Hunter 95). In doing so he "forces her to suffer about as painful an emotional shock as it is possible for a man to inflict upon a woman" in normal Elizabethan society, and is "thereby…bringing public disgrace upon her father Leonato, who is [also] his host and governor of Messina" (Hunter 95, Vaughn 103). It

becomes very easy to classify Claudio as a villain, as Beatrice has done, due to his "cruel and ungracious behavior" (Vaughn). To further complicate matters for the audience, "Claudio is unreservedly forgiven" with little in the way of penance (Hunter 104). While "the Elizabethan dramatic tradition would have disposed *Much Ado's* first audience to see in Claudio, and figures like him, images of its own frailty," yet even with this perspective, he does seem like he does not deserve to be let off so easily (Hunter 105). I was cast as Claudio in Winedale's 2016 Summer class production of *Much Ado About Nothing*, and that perspective emphasized one key feature of Claudio's character that a textual analysis may miss: he is young, and is subject to all of youth's follies. The first scene tells much about the play; it very obviously establishes Beatrice and Benedick as witty word warriors poised for battle, for example. But there is much to be said in what's not heard. Don John, for instance, has one line: "I thank you. I am not of many words, but I thank you," which succinctly establishes him as the killjoy (Shakespeare, *Much Ado about Nothing*, I.i.151-2). Claudio, who is bragged of at the very beginning, and is the second character name given in the play, does not speak until everyone else has left. He shyly reveals he thinks Hero is "the sweetest lady that ever [he] looked on," and is teased for it by his friends (Shakespeare, *Much Ado about Nothing*, I.i.180-1). Claudio is young, the little brother of the soldier group, and his identity as youthful, therefore untried, untutored, and unaware is an essential part of his character. This youthful fallacy is a facet of the Petrarchan lover, and when considered would be a fundamental part of how he is acted on stage.

Shakespeare's comedies are about the transition from youth to adulthood, because they are about transitioning from homosocial to heterosexual relationships, and Shakespeare often illustrates foolish lovers as young men such as Claudio. When we meet him, he has recently acquired a reputation, and is accordingly concerned to maintain it. But his reactions to potential

threats showcase the worries of an inexperienced young man, not the rages of a self-righteous man. Initially he worries about Pedro's self-appointed role in wooing Hero for him, and when Don John hints at truth in his fear that "the Prince woos for himself," he is enraged and leaps to wild general conclusions from his imagined specific situation in a succinct soliloquy (Shakespeare, *Much Ado about Nothing* II.i.168). When Don John arrives on the scene to trick him again, he wastes no time in asking Don John that "if there be any impediment [to his marriage] I pray you discover it," and soon after listening to those claims declares he will shame Hero at the altar if they are correct (Shakespeare, *Much Ado about Nothing,* III.ii.87-8). Even in effectually proposing to Hero, he proclaims, "I give myself away for you," consciously noting his feeling that on some level he is giving away some sort of control or leverage on his life (Shakespeare, *Much Ado about Nothing,* II.i.294). Many of his concerns, on further review, are all exaggerated by youth, and therefore rooted in his inexperience.

Yet it seems that after the friar, "through the ability of charity to arrive…at the truth about [Hero's supposed adultery] through the dispassionate observation of appearance," devises a trick to "change slander to remorse" "through the pretense that Hero is dead," he ceases his foolishness (Shakespeare, *Much Ado about Nothing*, 211; Hunter 96). After Don John flees and Borachio tells all, there is a change in how Claudio listens and responds to what people say, and it is connected with the second deception Claudio is subjected to: Hero's supposed death at his accusations. Claudio recognizes that he is being let off easy for shaming Hero publically, calling his 'punishment' of being prepared to marry someone besides Hero and visiting her tomb an "overkindness" and accepting it without expressing any thoughts about his circumstances (Shakespeare, *Much Ado about Nothing*, V.i.). Even Don Pedro follows Claudio's lead when he puts himself at Leonato's mercy. Claudio is focused now not on the risks he ran in arranging the

marriage, but the "rare semblance" in which he "loved [Hero] first" (Shakespeare, *Much Ado about Nothing*, V.i.245-6). With this statement, he literally declares her to be visually unstained by adultery. Beforehand, he had rejected her at the altar, saying,

> O Hero, what a Hero hadst thou been,
> If half thy outward graces had been placed
> About thy thoughts and counsels of thy heart!
> But fare thee well, most foul, most fair! Farewell,
> Thou pure impiety and impious purity!
> (Shakespeare, *Much Ado about Nothing,* IV.i.1-4)

Here, he mixes his opinions about her likeness with the impure ideas he projects onto her into one contradictory image. His renewed focus on her actual appearance over his worries about her purity and honesty is best exemplified in the final scene, when he unceremoniously shouts "Another Hero!" when Hero unveils herself (Shakespeare, *Much Ado about Nothing*, V.iv.61). Even when looking in Hero's face, he adheres to the lie he had been told about her death, indicating more trust in what people tell him than he had before. Because of this outlook, he would be inclined to be attentive to Hero's following statement. She says, "One Hero died defiled, yet I do live/And surely as I live I am a maid," effectively framing Claudio's outburst at the first wedding attempt as the metaphorical murder of a false image of Hero, which she portrays as an entity separate from herself, dividing the false unity Claudio established at the altar (Shakespeare, *Much Ado about Nothing*, V.i.62-3). Seeing as Claudio doesn't say anything else to her after she says this and the marriage will goes forward, it must be concluded that he understood her statement, and now trusts what she says rather than anything else.

Both Don Pedro and Don John's campaigns of misinformation, once everyone realizes what has happened, seem to result in a more socially settled environment composed of people willing to exchange their bachelordom for a married life. In Shakespeare's world, marriage marked the end of childhood, and is used to do so in the comedies in general. But *Much Ado* focuses the conversation on the pros and cons of marriage through Beatrice and Benedick's witty exchanges on the negatives of marriage. Because of this, the power of deception to change minds is made obvious when they deny their former attitudes and embrace their fate. The notion of deception changing Claudio's mind is, as we have seen, also applicable, though necessary to indicate through performance choices. The deceptions in the play cause Benedick and Beatrice to cease their tirade against marriage and dramatically turn to pursue it, while the supposed death of Hero enacts a more subtle change in Claudio. In the last scene, the contents of Benedict's final speech, and Claudio's general lack of speech, establish a general atmosphere of comic denouement that emphasize the changes the deceived parties have undergone. To finalize the comic triumph, Don John is caught, but of course, his punishment is put off till later, and the celebration begins.

Chapter Two
As You Like It: "I Can Live No Longer by Thinking"[3]

"There's no clock in the forest," Orlando chimes when first meeting his love Rosalind when she is disguised as Ganymede, and when considering the following discussion about how "Time travels in divers paces with divers persons," as well as the structure of the play itself, we understand their meaning well enough (Shakespeare, *As You Like It*, III.ii.297, 303-4). *As You Like It*, fitting its pastoral themes and setting, "is a play in which, at a superficial level, very little seems to happen" (Sillars lxxx). It contains little in the way of the fast paced battle scenes of his histories and tragedies, or even the shipwrecks and sword fights of *Twelfth Night*. All such events are contained in "the first act of the comedy [which] includes a fistfight, an attempted murder, a wrestling match, an arson plot, and a banishment" (Vaughn 121). It is made clear "by contrast" that "life in Arden is singularly free from the bustling activity and intrigues of life at court," and the structure of the play enforces this dichotomy – Orlando fights off a lion later in the play, and we have to settle for secondhand storytelling, keeping the action distant and the tone unhurried (Vaughn 121). The latter section instead focuses on dialogue from everyone from unrefined peasants like Audrey and William to its wits: Rosalind, Touchstone, and Jacques. *As You Like It* is also heavy on songs, some of which comprise almost entire scenes, like "A Lover and His Lass," as well as others that act to fill time and complement theme and on-stage action. Nowhere to be found is any Prospero urging Ariel that it is almost time for him to be freed, or for anything in particular. Duke Senior tells us that the life they have in Arden since their banishment "finds tongues in trees, books in the running brooks,/Sermons in stones, and good in everything," as if to say that their life is free of worries that do not change with the weather (Shakespeare, *As You Like It*, II.i.16-7). Agnes Latham notes in an introduction to an Arden

[3] Shakespeare, *As You Like It*, " (V.ii.49)

edition of the play that in *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, "Valentine meditates on his life as a banished man" in a similar way (Latham lvii). However, their life is not so free from trouble. The most obvious example is the hungry lioness and venomous snake that Orlando finds waiting to strike Oliver, but the wood itself was not intrinsically a wonderland for the city folk who stayed there for a time. Actually, "the Duke and his followers are outlaws, camping in caves," and hunting to survive, not on vacation, and thus, "it has become a critical commonplace that his pleasure in the wild woods is an object of Shakespeare's satire, an affectation" for one very simple reason (Latham lxix). At the end of the play, when Duke Frederick abdicates, Duke Senior proclaims:

> …every of this happy number
> That have endured shrewd days and nights with us
> Shall share the good of our returned fortune
> According to the measure of their states.
> (Shakespeare, *As You Like It*, V.iv.171-4)

The Duke does not seem to have the pleasant memories of Arden to back up his rhetoric in II.i as anything other than a call to arms against a hostile world. His weapon against the "churlish chiding of the winter's wind" is more exactly a shield – when confronted with the adversity the world brings to his door (or, I suppose, cave opening), he will "smile and say/'This is no flattery; these are counsellors/That feelingly persuade me what I am'" (Shakespeare, *As You Like It*, II.i.7, 9-11). The play's central characters win our hearts through their ability to confront adversary as opportunity, and to rationalize "the bleak air [of] this desert" as a "wholly just…refuge…for those against whom injustice has been perpetrated" which is "more free from peril than the envious court" intrinsically requires some degree of self-deception, which the Duke encourages

as a means to help them "translate the stubbornness of fortune/Into so quiet and so sweet a style" (Shakespeare, *As You Like It*, II.vi.14-6, II.i.4, 19-20; Vaughn 119). Experience soon shows that "this 'golden world' is not untarnished, not without its problems and challenges," and if, like the Duke, one sees "good in everything," even those challenges, one is better equipped to face them (Vaughn 119; Shakespeare, *As You Like It*, II.i.17). While several other characters echo this attitude, none embrace and enact it as fully as his daughter Rosalind, who uses her banishment, and the situations that come from it, as opportunities to express herself and affect others through the establishment and manipulation of outright deception.

As a matter of fact, Rosalind is suspected of some sort of deception from the beginning. Duke Frederick gives no reason for banishing her initially, besides a lack of trust, but after very reasonable arguments from Rosalind and Celia, he betrays a more specific concern to Celia:

> [Rosalind] is too subtle for thee, and her smoothness,
> Her very silence, and her patience
> Speak to the people, and they pity her.
> Thou art a fool. She robs thee of thy name,
> And thou wilt show more bright and seem more virtuous
> When she is gone.
> (Shakespeare, *As You Like It*, I.iii.75-80)

Interestingly, he claims her status as a threat rests in her silence and patience rather than in any attempt to oppose his own power. These are Elizabethan signifiers of "the ideal performance of female gender," not of evil: "women [were supposed to] remain chaste, obedient, silent, stay at home and practice a religious life," and even though Frederick acknowledges Rosalind's adherence to these values, he denounces her nevertheless as a threat to the place Celia holds

relative to these "values, philosophies, and ideologies of a masculinist culture" (Alfar 36). After he belabors his decree and leaves, Celia immediately condemns her own father and the typical dynasty he means to establish, saying she will "let [her] father seek another heir" and go with Rosalind (Shakespeare, *As You Like It*, I.iii.97). Celia's decision against her family further establishes his harsh words and determination against Rosalind as the product of his anxious and cruel concern with maintaining his usurped dukedom.

After this, Rosalind chooses to take on a threatening and deceptive appearance in reaction to her banishment, and goes on to utilize it to influence the world around her. Celia, Frederick's daughter pledges to join her in exile and plans to "put [herself] in poor and mean attire" in order to "never stir assailants" as they travel (Shakespeare, *As You Like It*, I.iii.109-12). Celia, as we shall soon see, proves the level-headed, play-it-safe one of the group. Rosalind cuts her off to suggest something different: "a swashing and a martial outside/As many other mannish cowards have/That do outface it with their semblances," suggesting that an outward disguise meant to put off highwaymen and other dangers is only as deceptive as a cowardly man ignoring his fears (Shakespeare, *As You Like It*, I.iii.118-20). While Celia jumps to concealment to weather banishment, Rosalind physically arms herself with "a gallant curtle axe upon [her] thigh [and] a boar-spear in [her] hand" by deciding to disguise herself as a man (Shakespeare, *As You Like It*, I.iii.). Julia in *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* and Viola in *Twelfth Night* take up similar disguises in order to take advantage of male privileges such as not getting attacked while travelling or being allowed to speak one's mind more freely, as previously mentioned, but neither is as combat-focused as she is. However, she does not go on to combat others with the weapons she wears, but instead uses her wits to object to their ideas.

Oliver expresses the same sort of feelings about Orlando in the very first scene that Duke Frederick has about Rosalind. After convincing Charles the wrestler to try to injure Orlando should he challenge him tomorrow, by describing his elder brother as an "envious emulator of every man's good parts, [and] a secret and unnatural contriver against [himself] and his natural brother," he proclaims alone that "[he knows] not why [he] hates nothing more than [Orlando]" and then that his subjects' love for his brother has led to him being "altogether misprized" (Shakespeare, *As You Like It*, I.i.135-7, 156-7, 161). Oliver's jealousy is the only clear reason he "stays [Orlando] at home unkept…and mines [his] gentility with [his] education" and this jealousy too, comes off as particularly unfounded. Orlando's reaction to the ill treatment his brother puts him through, described in detail in the first lines of the play, is to claim his right to the inheritance of his father by force. Both this and Rosalind's reactions we take as justified and not intended to harm, due to the ill treatment they receive. Because of this, when Rosalind takes to active deception, we are assured she means well even if it is unplanned and contradictory, and this will affect how we see the results of that deception.

Before Rosalind is banished, she first witnesses Orlando's wrestling match with Charles. Immediately after Le Beau tediously tells them of "three proper men, of excellent growth and presence," all of whom "Charles threw in a moment" and left badly injured, and that further wrestling will follow in the very spot they stand (Shakespeare, *As You Like It*, I.ii.114-5, 119). This is, of course, the same Charles that Oliver asked to harm Orlando as grievously as possible, and, of course, he is the next up to wrestle. Naturally, Rosalind's sympathies fall with Orlando, and she expresses them in an interesting manner. To wish him well, Rosalind implores, "pray heaven I be deceived in you," meaning that she hopes he will prove her wrong, in thinking he would lose to Charles (Shakespeare, *As You Like It*, I.ii.188-9). She expresses that proving her

wrong in this instance would be a good thing, and while this is a small statement, it reiterates some of my claims about Shakespeare's depiction of deception in the comedies so as to foreshadow them here. As with those other deceptions, what seems unlikely wins out. When Orlando succeeds and reveals he is "the youngest son of Sir Rowland de Boys," the dialogue switches from prose to verse, and everyone leaves except for Orlando, Celia, and Rosalind, who remarks that her "father lover Sir Rowland as his soul" (Shakespeare, *As You Like It*, I.ii.212-3, 225). The following conversation goes exactly as one would expect: Orlando and Rosalind fall for each other in a heartbeat. However, their reactions are exceedingly different. Rosalind gives him her necklace and tells him he "has overthrown/More than [his] enemies," while Orlando is dumbfounded and cannot move himself to speak to her (Shakespeare, *As You Like It*, I.ii.245-6). This is easily explained with their most essential differences: the company they keep and their personalities. Rosalind is always with Celia, and their "loves/Are dearer than the natural bond of sisters" (Shakespeare, *As You Like It*, I.ii.267). As one would expect because of this, Rosalind proves capable of very intense expressions of emotion and wit. Orlando, on the other hand, has had little company other than Oliver, who despises him, and Adam, who is a very old man and presumably does not fill the total conversational needs of a young man such as Orlando. Moving forward, he is soon further established as a foolish and inexperienced young man.

Orlando's social inexperience and general clumsiness, as well as his physical prowess, come into play again when he meets Rosalind's father in the forest. Adam, who has come with him, is starving, and Orlando leaves him to seek out food for the both of them. He finds Duke Senior's camp, and demands food from them at sword point; as he assumes "that all things had been savage [in Arden]," such shows of force are the only way to get what he wants from others there (Shakespeare, *As You Like It*, II.vii.106). Yet as far as we can tell, he has lived much of his

life, and certainly the portion of his life we have witnessed on the stage before this, without the sort of gentility he implicitly attributes to the court. Duke Senior does not need this perspective to take Orlando's threats in stride, and his quick ease in deescalating the situation helps the audience recover more quickly as well. Unmoved by this new storm, he calmly suggests that his "gentleness shall force/More than [his] force move us to gentleness," disproving Orlando's expectations and satisfying his needs, and Orlando understands him at once (Shakespeare, *As You Like It*, II.vii.101-2).

Orlando's time in the forest seems to mostly be split between the Duke's camp and conversation with Rosalind while she is disguised as Ganymede, and in both places he learns important social lessons. The next time we see Orlando after he and Adam are accepted into the Duke's camp, he is putting verses he has written about Rosalind on the trees, "that every eye which in this forest looks/Shall see [her] virtue witnessed everywhere," but what these eyes universally find is bad poetry (Shakespeare, *As You Like It*, III.ii.7-8). There are many jokes at its expense regarding its stylistic flaws, but the content is more relevant to our discussion. In the sample Celia reads, Orlando claims Rosalind is a representation of every supposed ideal held by a long list of generally well-admired women of history and myth:

> Nature presently distilled
> Helen's cheek, but not her heart,
> Cleopatra's majesty,
> Atalanta's better part,
> Sad Lucretia's modesty.
> Thus Rosalind of many parts
> By heavenly synod was devised

Of many faces, eyes, and hearts

To have the touches dearest prized.

(Shakespeare, *As You Like It*, III.ii.142-50)

Meanwhile we know that he has hardly said a word to Rosalind before, and has heard only a little more from her. Orlando compares her to these attributes of these women because he rightfully supposes her kindness towards him and her beauty are aspects of a general goodness that Rosalind possesses, and then wrongfully equates that goodness with the set of traits that men in Shakespeare's time associated with ideals of female behavior. He uses these ideals because they have much to do with what women are to men rather than who women are of themselves, and Orlando is preoccupied with who she is to him, rather than who she is of herself.

Now Shakespeare is set to utilize an idea he "owes to Lyly [which] is Rosalind's proposed 'love-cure'," unique in being labeled as such, but similar in touch to other beneficial deceptions which I have noted (Latham lix). After Rosalind makes several jokes at the expense of the rough poems Orlando left on the trees of Arden, she soon comes to talk to him about it, and ends up addressing the immaturity associated with his more moronic poetical statements. Soon after, Orlando himself comes by. Her first instinct is to hide, which in and of itself tells us she is unprepared or unwilling to meet with him. Jaques and Orlando approach, with a conversation that shows Orlando attempting to justify his feelings yet again. Once Jaques leaves, Rosalind's excitement wins out over her apprehension, as per usual, and she approaches him "like a saucy lackey and under that habit [plays] the knave with him" (Shakespeare, *As You Like It*, III.ii.291-2). She stays true to her word: her first statement to him is that she believes "there is no true lover in the forest," appealing to a depiction of the Petrarchan lover that Orlando fails to fully emulate (Shakespeare, *As You Like It*, III.ii.298). In context, this is a joke deriving from

Orlando's response to her request for the time, but it leads to Orlando asking her many questions about her thoughts on women and romantic love. This is a stroke of luck for Rosalind, as it allows her to improvise a discussion about his feelings specifically. Rosalind goes on to characterize Orlando's love as insincere, due to its inability to conform to "[her] uncle's marks" of lover character conventions, and describes it as an illness that "[she] would cure…if [he] would but call [her] Rosalind and come every day to" her house, and talk to her as he would talk to Rosalind (Shakespeare, *As You Like It*, III.ii.360, 414-5). According to her criticism, he follows the convention mechanically, praising her as described earlier but fails to manifest the physical, mental, and emotional traits that are part and parcel of the depiction of a Petrarchan lover, which Rosalind describes at length. If he were, he would be sloppily dressed and look unhealthy, but he is instead "rather point-device in his accoutrements, as loving [himself] than seeming the lover of any other" (Shakespeare, *As You Like It*, III.ii.372-4). He hardly could have attracted her attention in the context of the wrestling match if "everything about [him demonstrated] a careless desolation," nor would he have survived the match (Shakespeare, *As You Like It*, III.ii.371-2). Her declarations characterize Orlando's wooing behavior first as incorrect according to an established stereotype, then claims that stereotype is flawed, which makes Orlando determined to prove the validity of his feelings.

In IV.i, when he come to woo her, she begins a discussion that vacillates between witty, lengthy descriptions of manly imperfections and womanly transgressions and assumes both as inevitable. Here, Orlando's usual persistence in talking about his feelings for Rosalind is marked by several objections to the picture of women that she paints. However, "[he] must take her for better for worse" in her exaggerated "display of feminine temperament [meant to] give him a permanent distaste for women" (Latham lix). After Rosalind claims she would be able to fend off

the objections Orlando would make if he found her sleeping with someone else, he immediately and curtly suggests that he should leave, because "[he] must attend the Duke at dinner," as if he were upset or at the least outfaced. Even Celia claims, after Orlando has left, that "[she has] simply misused [their] sex in [her] young love prate" (Shakespeare, *As You Like It*, IV.i.193-4). In summary, gone is all Rosalind's curative justification of III.ii, and substituted is a particularly hyperbolic negative tone, which she punctuates throughout. Orlando's objections to her comments all follow a certain pattern: 'Rosalind would never do that!' As discussed earlier, he does not exactly know her very well, so he has idealized her as entirely virtuous. By insisting the opposite standpoint, Rosalind forces him to consider that she is not necessarily one or the other. Furthermore, by suggesting this antithesis of ideas, the scene can draw a comparison to II.vii, wherein Orlando assumes the worst of the Duke's party before Duke Senior says that they would feed him and Adam of their own accord. The comparison between the two scenes, since it is between two opposites, is yet another antithesis. In addition to their mutual use of antithesis related to Orlando's assumptions, they also both show Orlando learning a social lesson. The Duke's lesson is obvious: people can be kind. In IV.i, as mentioned before, the lesson is less clear, but there seems to be one nonetheless. Throughout the scene, Orlando protests against what Rosalind, in disguise, says she would do, and leaves as soon as he stops protesting.

We can assume from this that he has no more arguments against Rosalind's claims for now, yet he still intends to come back to her even after fighting off a lion. Clearly, he can't have been persuaded totally by her depictions of women as false and men as indifferent, otherwise he would have no cause to prove himself still in love to Ganymede. But since his persistence on her virtue is gone, there is reason to think he has compared his hyperbolic stance on her virtue with Ganymede's hyperbolic stance on her transgressiveness, and thereby reached a less idealized and

more experiential approach to dealing with how Rosalind and his assumptions about her compare. The next time they speak, Orlando says little, but claims "[he] can no longer live by thinking," meaning literally that he tires of hearing Rosalind, as Ganymede, pretend to be Rosalind, but by his behavior that he no longer feels the need to praise her incessantly (Shakespeare, *As You Like It*, V.ii.49). This scene is the day before Orlando and Rosalind get married. Played on the stage, seeing Orlando display a more mature attitude towards love would be an ideal way to foreshadow the marriage, because it communicates that he is not only dismayed at not being married, he is socially competent enough to get married.

As You Like It presents a lively and engaging discussion of Elizabethan sociality, and develops its tenets through the deceptive mode I have described as a comic structural staple. In the first part of the play, antitheses of appearance verses reality and goodness verses evil are laid out. Later on, in the forest of Arden, these antitheses are exaggerated and debated between Orlando, Rosalind, and the Duke. Orlando goes back and forth between them and through having his expectations and assumptions challenged, takes on a more mature worldview with more reliance on experience than insistence.

Chapter Three:
Twelfth Night: "But Mine is all as Hungry as the Sea"[4]

The Illyria of *Twelfth Night* is largely concerned with the desire for pleasure. The case in point for the play's preoccupation with excess is Sir Toby Belch, who is second only to Falstaff of Shakespeare's *Henry IV* plays in his desire for self-satisfaction through ale, food, and song. The play is so in the carnival spirit of gluttony and passion that it is named for one of the Catholic feasts: Twelfth Night, which is traditionally second only to Fat Tuesday in scale. There is also a "strain of wistful melancholy…throughout its principal love plot (Vaughn 130). This somber tone "is not misplaced" because the titular holiday is "the final celebration of the Christmas season" and is therefore an end of celebration (Vaughn 130). The first scene opens with Duke Orsino's famous cry calling for "excess of [music, so] that surfeiting, [his] appetite may sicken and so die," establishing him as melancholic, and the other three lovers in Shakespeare's often used group of four are all mourning the death of a sibling (Shakespeare, *Twelfth Night*, I.i.2-3). These characters' focus on desire and excess of melancholy emphasize another common thread that runs through the play: a preoccupation with the self. This self-obsession is exemplified by Malvolio, the ill-tempered steward of the Lady Olivia's household. He does whatever he can to thwart Sir Toby and his friend Sir Andrew Aguecheek's drunken carousing, less out of obedience to Olivia than out of an absolute conviction of his own self-righteousness and right to authority. Duke Orsino and Sir Andrew, though less so, are similarly convinced of their own virtues, and all three eventually and foolishly attempt to woo Olivia, although she has shut off all contact with the outside world to mourn her brother in a rather extreme fashion. Into this self-obsessed world enters Viola, who upon finding out her brother is

[4] Shakespeare, *Twelfth Night*, (II.iv.100)

probably dead and that she cannot find a place at Olivia's table, decides to enter the service of the Duke by dressing in her brother's clothes. Her identity thus sealed and her employment thus secured, she begins to create new tensions in the social fabric of Illyria with her indomitable spirit and hesitant actions. Her disguise, and Maria's deceitful letter left for Malvolio, sets off a chain of events that leads to most of the characters being forced to reconsider their self-image and their flawed ideas of other people, for the betterment of most of them. These changes caused by the deceptions in the play, for better or worse, largely depend on or follow from the intentions of the people implicated. The deceptions, as a whole, shift the character's self-obsessed and pleasure-obsessed worldviews over to a more balanced one based on experiential understanding and acceptance.

"The anticomic theme," is, in *Twelfth Night* and similar plays, "expressed by mood instead of…an element in the structure" because, unlike many of the comedies, we have no Benedick railing against marriage, nor any enraged Egeus forcing his daughter on someone she does not want (Frye, *A Natural Perspective*, 74). As I have said, this mood is primarily manifested in a tendency towards self-obsession and pleasure-seeking. However, how we esteem ourselves ends up affecting how we treat other people, as the play accordingly shows. Orsino is self-absorbed and concerned with pleasure and emotional overload rather than what his professed beloved, Olivia, might actually want, proving "inconstant…in his favors" and more so in his moods (Shakespeare, *Twelfth Night*, I.iv.7). Olivia herself has retreated from the rest of the world to mourn her brother's death, "which she would keep fresh/And lasting in her sad remembrance," similarly concerning herself with her feelings rather than the people around her, though importantly not taking it out on anyone (Shakespeare, *Twelfth Night*, I.i.30-1). Sir Andrew is continually convinced by Sir Toby of his non-existent merit. Malvolio, as said before, is

hilariously self-obsessed. And even Viola, the play's protagonist, is so thrown by her brother's possible death and her present circumstances that she disguises herself in his likeness.

Viola's self-image is her main concern, but only at first. She decides to disguise herself as a man in Scene ii of Act I, her first scene, and she remains in her male getup for the rest of the play. Once Orsino employs her in the guise of 'Cesario' she becomes emotionally involved in his self-image. She also becomes implicitly involved in Sir Andrew's false self-image as well, insofar as the attention Olivia pays her requires Toby to persuade him to challenge her to a duel to maintain and prove his image and worth. However, Viola's woes, the primary reason she disguises herself, are due mainly to the supposed death of her twin brother. His absence seems to create some sort of identity confusion for her as well. It is as if she is compelled to commemorate him by taking on a male aspect herself. Olivia is mourning her brother, too – Illyria, at the start of the play, seems to be a world where there are as much legitimate sadness for women as there are is pointless pleasure for men. Olivia's mourning, like Viola's brother's death, pushes Viola away from the female world. Olivia in principle refuses to allow anyone an audience, and therefore Viola must find somewhere else to go. Viola's mode of mourning, wherein she takes her brother's image up in his memory and thereby interacts with other people, establishes her not just as the protagonist, but as virtuous. Her natural virtue and knowledge of her abilities are fully exhibited in her soliloquy at the end of 2.2, by which point the play's middle period of confusion is established, at least in the main plot between her, Orsino, and Olivia. She worries here that her "disguise [is] a wickedness/Wherein the pregnant enemy does much" to fool Olivia into falling in love with her, displaying her concern for being honest even while in costume, and concludes with the prescient knowledge that, like in any comedy, "Time…must untangle this, not [her, because] it is too hard a knot for [her] t'untie" (Shakespeare, *Twelfth Night*, II.ii.27-8, 40-1).

Olivia's seclusion is presented as a parallel to Orsino's self-absorption, and thereby often depicted as a pointless, or even regrettable use of her time, by other characters. Feste, who in acknowledging his foolishness paradoxically establishes himself as the most intelligent member of the cast, claims that since Olivia does "know [her brother's] soul is in heaven," she is a "fool…to mourn for [him]," a train of thought she immediately accepts (Shakespeare, *Twelfth Night*, I.v.66, 67). However, it will take more than wit to break her from her spell of melancholy. Viola mourns, yet still remains in contact with the outside world. Because of this she is able to help break Orsino and Olivia out of their respective melancholies through the tasks she is assigned or events she otherwise becomes involved in.

The whole exercise of Viola's disguise coupled with her employment as the Duke's servant puts her in unfamiliar situations: a duel, wooing a woman for someone else, and talking with men as a man about women. Her actions in and reactions to these situations display her natural capability and intelligence, while her disguise gives her a safe place to act from and to contemplate her identity, in terms of gender and otherwise, until her brother is revealed to her in the last act. She has no plan for unravelling the love triangle she completed, or for dealing with her supposed conflict with Sir Andrew. Because this is a comic world, she doesn't need to have a plan – she is naturally good, and the world around her comes to her aid. Everything works out for her and most of the others by the final scene, where her disguise and the tricks Mariah and Sir Toby engineered for Malvolio are revealed. Her and her fellows' lives are improved partly due to her brother, who is more than capable of fighting Sir Andrew and Sir Toby and resolves their supposed conflict with ease, and due to Fabian, who clarifies Malvolio's situation to Olivia by reading her his letter. However, it is the relationships that Viola has developed with Orsino and Olivia that are the primary facilitators for their happy ending.

Viola's bond with Orsino is the relationship she is most invested in through the play, not counting her relationship with Sebastian. Early on, she falls in love with him, but cannot consummate that love because of the disguise she cannot help but maintain, seeing as she would not have a place to go if she removed it and consequently quit working for Orsino. But he is not just out of reach due to the necessity of her male habit. He is unhealthily concerned with the supposed validity of his fake feelings as well, which is a barrier between him and any sincere relationship he could have with anyone. Orsino is a parody of the Petrarchan lover, a response to "the bulk of lyrical poetry in Shakespeare's age [which] was written in a convention in which a male lover revolved cyclically around an inscrutable female figure who was normally cruel, though her cruelty was itself a sexual fascination" (Frye, *A Natural Perspective*, 84). Orsino's love for the sad love songs he calls for his musicians to play, and his resulting assumptions about who Olivia is and what her constant rejections of his advances mean is both indicative and critical of this convention. He claims he is deeply in love with Olivia, but seems to be more in love with the idea of being in love. He dwells on his own experience entirely, and claim support for the validity of his feelings merely by their supposed intensity, the fact that he is the Duke, and because he feels she is supposed to respond to his love, even though he never even sees Olivia in the play until the last act, and all previous records of their interactions were through messengers she spurned.

However, while he references a Petrarchan lover, there is no validity in his presumption of powerlessness as part of adopting the characteristics of that character. Orsino is the Duke of Illyria, the highest-ranking person in the cast, and he makes great show of his power even as he claims "[his] love can give no place, bide no denay" (Shakespeare, *Twelfth Night*, II.iv.124). He even expresses two different viewpoints on its intensity and his responses to it, much like

Proteus. Early in II.iv, he says: "however we do praise ourselves/Our fancies are more giddy and unfirm/More longing, wavering, sooner lost or worn/Than women's are," when attempting to advise Cesario's approach to courtship (Shakespeare, *Twelfth Night*, II.iv.32-5). But when he is criticized himself for his love to Olivia, which he has established as something akin to Petrarch and Laura's relationship, he exclaims,

> There is no woman's sides
> Can bide the beating of so strong a passion
> As love doth give my heart. No woman's heart
> So big, to hold so much. They lack retention.
> Alas, their love may be called appetite,
> No motion of the liver, but the palate,
> That suffers surfeit, cloyment, and revolt
> (Shakespeare, *Twelfth Night*, II.iv.93-9).

In order for him to prove Olivia's conformity to the cruel mistress and his to the adoring lover, he must also claim that his capacity for emotion is more legitimate than hers. Clearly, this is not the case. Viola cautiously and patiently bears his casual misogyny and self-obsession because she loves him but of course she attempts a counterargument, and seems to succeed. She calls him out for professing love for Olivia without knowing or caring what she wants, and describes the strength and validity of her hypothetical sister's love – really her love for Orsino – to prove that women's love can be as strong as men's and lend validity to her point that Orsino's love is baseless. She takes care to deliver this as a hypothetical rather than a first-hand testament, and Orsino cannot argue against her, implying her argument has succeeded. Again, she could not argue against his flawed ideas of other people or of himself without her disguise. Here, "the

words and the costume collude to present an integrated species of lying" and this instance of the trickery in the play proves beneficial (Sillars 17).

This is the last time the two speak until the final scene. Here, Olivia reveals she has married Cesario (she has actually married Sebastian) and Orsino threatens to kill her, then banishes her, then, after Sebastian comes and Cesario's identity as Viola is revealed, asks her to marry him. This may seem abnormal, or at least like a bad choice for Viola, but other factors play out to allow this progression of the comic plot. Orsino's threats of death or banishment are never acted upon, and come so close on the heels of each other, that they cannot be taken seriously as anything other than another example of his emotional changeability. Viola's revelation as a woman, given their close history developed over the play, must give him pause and make him reconsider their interactions and importantly her earlier arguments against his love. It also importantly shows that she has done nothing he claims she did. Considering how he quickly developed trust in her and opened up to her about his feelings, how after she describes her disguise and reveals her gender he immediately moves to marry her, and the play's identity of comedy, we must assume that by the end of the play he is able to take her words to heart. Any production of the play would certainly have to take this into account to make Orsino's noted vacillations and his marriage at the end seem in any way legitimate on the stage, as I attempted to do playing Orsino in the 2015 Winedale Summer class. My work centered, again, on making the Petrarchan lover who has been cruel himself seem forgivable and understand his mistakes by the end of the play. Otherwise, the whole character would have felt artificial to the audience, not just his circumstances. The comic plot demands a legitimate relationship be formed in the course of the plot. Through the first half of the play, there are several opportunities to develop romantic tension between them, if not a full physical sense of curiosity and hesitation between them

bordering on a budding romance. Orsino's lines about trusting Cesario and her ability to critique him without being chastised are further indications that they trust and respect each other, but must be shown with action, not just speech. It follows from that relationship, and because nothing in his lines shows anything about getting angry upon the revelation of her gender and learning he has been deceived the whole length of the play, that he has in some way taken her critique of his love, that she only could have made in disguise, to heart. Orsino's love for and acceptance of her is proven finally by his determination to wed her without having seen her in her "woman's weeds," for in declaring that she "shall from this time be / [his] mistress," while Viola is still Cesario, he "signifies [his] willingness to enter into a formal union with Viola without knowing for sure who she is, or even in some fundamental and relevant sense what she is" (Shakespeare, *Twelfth Night*, V.i.273, 325-6; Adams 145).

Viola's disguise also helps Olivia shake off a similarly limiting frame of mind. Unlike other disdainful comedic women, she "rejects thoughts of love, but she does so in favor of something else, a passionate surrender to what seems to be her love of grief," as Orsino claims to do, but for a more legitimate reason: her brother's death (Phialas 271). She relays through a messenger to Orsino that "the element itself, till seven years heat/Shall not behold her face at ample view," and Sir Toby complains about it the very first time he appears on stage, asking "what a plague means my niece to take the death of her brother thus?" (Shakespeare, *Twelfth Night*, I.iii.1-2). But even in this profound state of sadness, Viola's messages to her on behalf of Orsino cause her to "feel this youth's perfections/With an invisible and subtle stealth…creep in at mine eyes," and she at once becomes infatuated with Cesario. Although Cesario cannot marry her, since he is actually Viola, who loves Orsino, Olivia finds a supposedly exact analogue in Sebastian, and ignores her mourning rituals.

On the other hand, the deception committed against Malvolio, who is a stickler for the rules and never lacks a rationale for his actions, no matter how unstable, results in no happy ending with Olivia, nor does Sir Andrew. As the steward of Olivia's house, he is very concerned with his rank of steward. For example, his belief in "the central importance of rank, and the sensitivity which its violations arouse [in him], are shown in [his] sharp rebuttal of Viola's offer of money" (Sillars, 17). Despite his tight grip to the formalities of his rank, he is still convinced he should be allowed to rise above it, as we see later in the play. He is so convinced of his self-righteousness that he takes any and all pains to attempt to get Sir Toby and Sir Andrew banished from Olivia's household. As we find later in the play, this is coupled with his secret desire to marry her, and by that marriage becoming a Count himself. He is only interested in Olivia for his own sake and advantage, showing that the feeling "he calls love is vitiated by his self-love, and in this he is the antithesis of Viola, whose generous and self-sacrificing love of Orsino may be said to represent the opposite extreme" (Phialas 267). In comparison with Viola, his acts only accentuate the extremity of his self-involvement. After Malvolio threatens Toby, Andrew, and Feste in a particularly cruel manner for their drinking and singing late at night, Mariah, Olivia's maid, writes a letter in Olivia's handwriting to trick him into acting on that desire. He falls for the bait and ends up, like Andrew, as a scapegoat. The two fail because they do not see through the deceptions their fellows put them through, and remain in confusion until the end of the play. Sir Andrew, like Orsino, needs little persuasion to believe in his chance of winning Olivia's hand, and unlike Orsino, has no argument against his suit to Olivia raised to him in person. Again, Sir Toby continually and artfully persuades him of it each time he gets discouraged, which is often. It almost seems like for all his lack of book learning, he has some common sense, but that that sense is trumped by his love and trust in Sir Toby. Toby also convinces him that

Olivia wants him to challenge the disguised Viola to a duel. While Viola is unwilling to fight, the situation ends with Toby stealing his horse and the both of them getting soundly beaten by Sebastian, who is much more eager to fight than Viola is.

Unlike Orsino and Andrew, Malvolio was not so easily convinced of his supposed right to the target of his sexual interest. The letter Mariah writes as Olivia to persuade him to entertain these feelings seriously contains elaborate confessions of unnamed love and silly instructions on what she would want her beloved to do to let her know he requited that love. Using these wild devices, she appeals to his vanity and assumptions about Olivia to persuade him he has a chance with her, and it works "like aqua vitae with a midwife" (Shakespeare, *Twelfth Night*, II.v.192). He follows the precepts of the letter even though they are absolutely ridiculous and defy all common sense. Malvolio, who is so distempered and dismissive with the comic, human world of drunkards and lovers that surrounds him and that he disdains to inhabit, has little of that. In the end, "Malvolio's coming-to-know, which consists of the realization that he has been duped by Sir Toby and the others, is fundamentally a discovery of fact rather than of personal identity," because unlike some others, he, as well as Sir Andrew, are not given a chance to discover the worthy parts of themselves upon recognizing their folly (Adams 145).

All the characters that were deceived in *Twelfth Night* end up coming to a profound realization about themselves, not just about how they were deceived. While Malvolio is left without means to prove himself a better person or reintegrate himself with the social fabric of Illyria easily, and Andrew is left without means to do either at all, they, Orsino, and Olivia all confront and get past viewpoints and tendencies of theirs that promoted self-indulgence or otherwise got in the way of interacting with the world around them. Even Toby seems to have matured, making good on his promise to marry Mariah and seeming to disavow his former state

of constant drunkenness. The carnival is over, and yet the performance was not merely in vain. In the midst of the silliest of tricks, *Twelfth Night* is a play with a mind towards self-discovery, a process which those same tricks inform, clarify, and almost comprise in some cases. These deceptions, namely Viola's crossdressing and Mariah's letter, move the comic plot forward, and, in the end, push everything towards a happy resolution.

Conclusion:
"Till Each Circumstance of Place, Time, Fortune, do Cohere and Jump"[5]

Deception takes a pivotal role in Shakespeare's comedies, causing situations and interactions that edify, humble, and baffle characters. Often, these characters have frames of mind that lead them to be cruel, domineering, or judgmental towards others. In a comedy, the drama grows from the mistakes, falsehoods, and conceits of the lovers and their friends in typical comic social situations, like marriage, intergenerational conflict, and practical jokes. These are common events in the ordinary English person's life, but Shakespeare made them expansive and dramatic by adding exaggerated complications, unnatural folkloric elements, and elaborate deceptions. Shakespeare presents rigid story structures involving deceptions like cross-dressing, misinformation, and outright manipulation, that prompt characters to act according to their personalities, their worries, and their flawed opinions so bombastically that a given play often "presents a number of problems that stretch the reader's credulity, although they seem less troublesome on the stage" (Vaughn 102). These deceptions frame the way for a series of revelations which culminate in a final scene where everyone gets on stage and informs each other what happened over the course of the play. That resolution is the final and definitive statement that something good came of the deceptions which happened during the play. Much of this resolution is directed towards an impending marriage ceremony, since the comedies are generally focused on love stories. Marriage represents the validation of individual desire, feeling, and action by the community at large, and very often, due to Shakespeare's many motivations to write about characters of some sort of royal heritage, it also represents the handing over of the scepter and crown to a younger generation. This new generation which, in the course of a given

[5] Shakespeare, *Twelfth Night*, V.i.251-2

comedy, has asserted independence from the authority figures and grown past immature social conventions, seems fundamentally changed. But we never get to see how Duke Orlando and Duchess Rosalind rule their duchy, or how Claudio and Hero treat their children's suitors. The action of the Shakespearean comedy ends as soon as marriage becomes immanent – often, we don't even get to see the wedding – and in doing this, any change the characters experience takes place on the individual level and remains there. But these characters have changed, in circumstances that are often chaotic, understated, or otherwise questionable, and placing the marriage immediately after the final revelation allows such questionable content to be addressed. In the end of these standard comedies, all is found to be well, and the newly educated bachelors move on to married life. In fact, the deceptions that led to the wedding are kin to, or are themselves, situations that affect the social order on a larger, even governmental scale. These affects manifest in a return to order or a rejection of antagonism that parallels the situation of the lovers who have changed their ways of thinking after being deceived.

In *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, the mechanics of this situation are at its most fundamental. After a period spent in the confusion of the 'green world' of the forest between Milan and Verona, the Duke grants Valentine, whom he had banished, permission to marry his daughter Sylvia and come back to Milan. More jarring perhaps is the forgiveness granted to Proteus, which we have seen is a fundamental part of the other comedies as well. But even despite the recent memory of Proteus' rape attempt, everyone seems to be on the same page, even Julia; when Proteus says that "[he has] his wish forever," she replies, "and I mine" (Shakespeare, *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, 119, 120). As I have said, all the lying and tricking everyone in the play has done leads up to this point of revelation and reconciliation, and because of that, those deceptions become excusable. In Shakespeare's world, the two newly minted

gentlemen and their lovers, servants, and allies, can move on to their adult life without much more ado.

The end of *Much Ado about Nothing* has more concrete results regarding the social order: Don John, Don Pedro's evil bastard brother, has been caught following his attempt to flee Messina for his crimes. Not only that, but Benedick overrules Leonato's wish to postpone dancing until after the wedding and prevents Don Pedro from giving any orders about what to do with Don John. The comic spirit, as expressed and espoused in Benedick's final, famous speech, pervades the air. His command "strike up, pipers" is the last thing we hear, establishing once and for all that the events of the play have led to a distinctively positive situation, that being the impending double marriage ceremony, that takes precedent over a number of other concerns, some having to do indirectly with that same ceremony (Shakespeare, *Much Ado about Nothing*, V.iv.126). Again, we are troubled somewhat by Claudio's seemingly brief period of repentance and total reacceptance by Hero, but unlike *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, Claudio is concerned about whether or not she wants to marry him. He implies by saying "I am your husband, if you like of me," that he is her husband only if she accepts him as such (Shakespeare, *Much Ado about Nothing*, V.iv.58). Additionally, this is all before Hero reveals that she is still alive. Claudio accepts this knowledge with initial shock, and then does not say another word about it. In his mind, there is nothing more left to say.

As You Like It closes with a more resounding return to order that seen before, one that adds to Rosalind and Orlando's marital bliss. Rosalind's father, Duke Senior, regains his dukedom after Duke Frederick makes for the forest of Arden and upon attempting to enter, is converted to a religious life upon "meeting with an old religious man," showing once again the transformative power of the forest (Shakespeare, *As You Like It*, V.iv.159). Unlike the other

plays we have discussed, there is no need to forgive any great sins, because here, those who have wronged others, namely Oliver and Ferdinand, have disavowed their actions entirely, and given away their belongings to those they have wronged. The finality of the close of this play is anticipated by the appearance of Hymen, goddess of the hearth and home, bestowing divine approval on their actions. Hymen recognizes their relationships, and the deceptions that anticipated them, as part of a natural order, which they fulfill and complete in their marriage, which is akin to the social order that is restored when Duke Senior is given back his dukedom.

These comic resolutions are not entirely of their own breed, they share many traits with the endings of other Shakespeare plays, and for good reason. Shakespeare was employed by the English monarchy, and he "got started as a dramatist by writing a series of plays [where] nothing but misery and chaos" was in control "until a ruler appears who will do what the Tudors did – centralize authority," and this need for unification in resolution became a part of his comic resolutions as well. In deviations from the straightforward comedy experience we can see comedic conventions such as deception and reconciliation rephrased in another perspective, and we see it all the more clearly because of that perspective. Many of his plays derive themes from stories about intergenerational conflict, taking great pains to separate a younger generation of lovers they praise and depict as treating each other well from the older generation of fathers who use them to gain social advantage. This distance makes a clear division between the bliss of the lovers and the ambitions of the fathers. No play of his makes the division between the aims of the new and old generations clearer than does *The Tempest*. Prospero partly fits the role of "the Italian *commedia dell'arte*" "stock [character] Pantalone, sometimes called Prospero, usually a well-to-do Venetian, whose dramatic functions often included keeping his daughters away from suitors," insofar as his direct actions to Ferdinand and Miranda are meant to be taken, but he also

works as a magician behind the curtain, having deliberately brought Ferdinand to the island to secure a position on the Neapolitan throne for his daughter and take back his dukedom of Milan (Frye, *A Natural Perspective*, 174). And with that, Prospero's performance is over; he abandons his magic practice, forgives his brother for taking over his dukedom, and proclaims that "every third thought shall be [his] grave" when they are back in Naples (Shakespeare, *The Tempest*, 315). His deceptions have secured a blissful future for the second generation, proving his deceptions beneficial, although self-centered, though he does not have much time to revel in their joys.

An earlier play displays comparable intergenerational conflicts in a wholly tragic light. Lords Capulet and Montague share a similar sentiment at the end of *Romeo and Juliet*, for a much more melancholy reason: the recent death of their children. This incident transforms Romeo and Juliet's marriage, which was for the whole play a cardinal sin against their parental authorities and an active defiance of the "ancient grudge" the two families have been engaged in, into a relationship that everyone from the Prince to Paris' page respects as an honorable marriage (Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet*, 0.0.3). Juliet especially would have been held at fault for this, as she, "in rejecting her patrimony, signals her resolute privileging of her own desire, independent of her father's authority, which ought to associate her with monstrosity" in Elizabethan male eyes, but she is praised as being "true and faithful" instead (Alfar 69; Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet*, V.iii.302). Just as it is done in comedy, the patriarchy rallies around the younger generation and claims the good results of their activities outside the status quo.

However, in *Twelfth Night*, there is little change in the social order, and none of it seems to be permanent. There is no notion of a change of governance; Orsino remains in power

throughout, neither Malvolio or Sir Andrew advance in rank, as they have aspired to throughout the play, and even Malvolio's humiliation, according to Olivia's plan to make him "both the plaintiff and the judge/Of [his] own cause" and Orsino's request to "entreat him to a peace," seems to be temporary (Shakespeare, *Twelfth Night*, V.i.353-4, 380). The only thing that signifies some sort of return to order is that now at the end, as is the case in every comedy, everybody understands each other. This is partly due to facts being revealed, such as Cesario's real identity as a girl named Viola, Sebastian's presence in Illyria, and Mariah's creation of the letter Malvolio supposes Olivia wrote. This is also due in part to changes in attitude. Sir Toby disavows drunkenness, Orsino asks for forgiveness, and Viola no longer has to memorialize her brother; all of these events indicate these characters have abandoned ways of thinking that lead them to, for instance, threaten to kill people or discount other people's feelings, like Orsino did earlier. While in reading the text we can be uncertain about some of these results, such as Orsino being forgiven that easily, a production of the play would justify its position based on acting decisions made from textual cues in earlier scenes, and pass by such questions through its dramatic embrace of the comic conclusion. The final song, sung by Feste, is a brief summation of the scope of comedy, and its end fits its concerns:

> A great while ago the world begun,
> With hey, ho the wind and the rain,
> But that's all one, our play is done,
> And we'll strive to please you every day.
> (Shakespeare, *Twelfth Night*, V.i.405-8)

The message is simple. After four verses about childhood, manhood, marriage, and the end of life, Feste grants that there's a larger and more complex story behind everything here, but that it doesn't matter, because you have seen all the important stuff.

The Winter's Tale, a romance with a comic-derived plot akin to Claudio and Hero's in *Much Ado about Nothing*, takes this message of comic acceptance to the audience most dramatically in its final scene. Paulina suddenly assumes the powers of magic and performs a resurrection, turning a 'statue' of Hermione into Hermione herself, who was supposed dead sixteen years ago. Even the characters in the scene object to this, yet the momentum of the scene and Hermione's gradual awakening occupy their attention more. Paulina's response to these concerns tells us much about Shakespeare's approach to comedy: "that she is living/Were it but told you, should be hooted at/Like an old tale: but it appears she lives," or, essentially, 'what does it look like?' (Shakespeare, *The Winter's Tale*, V.iii.116-8). This is one of many references in Shakespeare's comedies to appearances not being deceptive, all the more relevant in context because of Leontes' prior insistence that Hermione, Polixenes, and Camillo were all lying about her infidelity. Now, Leontes is still king, and he has learned his lesson, mourned over sixteen years rather than a day, but the next royal couple has been decided, and their marriage is thereby an expression of a revitalization of the social order, almost like Duke Senior's return to the throne, Hero's unveiling, and Orsino and Viola's marriage rolled into one event. However magical Hermione's return is, the audience, if they exhibit the same beliefs that the comedies attempt to inspire in their own characters, accepts the joyous results as they appear to be, and with that, the play is over.

References:

Adams, Barry B. *Coming-to-Know: Recognition and the Complex Plot in Shakespeare*. New York: Peter Lang, 2000. Print.

Shakespeare's comedic plots are all about the transition from single childhood to married adulthood, and thereby focus on young lovers growing up through their wooing and other antics. Adams goes through the comedies chronologically, including the romances, to talk about how anagnorisis plays into the plots.

The book is somewhat matter-of-fact, but still states information about the plays in a concise manner that will allow for easy quoting. Many of Shakespeare's plays involve anagnorisis, and often this coming to know happens because of a deception or a misunderstanding. Therefore, just by talking about coming to know will be helpful in talking about deception or misunderstanding. This book should prove useful in my thesis.

Alfar, Cristina León. Fantasies of Female Evil: The Dynamics of Gender and Power in Shakespearean Tragedy. Newark: Associated University Presses, 2003. Print.

This smart and extensively cited analysis of how Elizabethan men describe and characterize women of power and how many female Shakespearean characters address them is focused on tragic characters. Alfar dissects misogynistic ideas held by many in Shakespeare's time which framed woman as inferior medically to morally, and questions assumptions made by male characters and many critics of the inherent evil of characters like Goneril and Regan.

It is well-known that the Elizabethan period's qualifying characteristic – a woman on the throne – lent the period a certain brand of misogyny. Shakespeare's comedies intrinsically involve male-female relationships, so it follows that they invoke the terms of that misogyny often. This text does a brilliant job of depicting the time's perceived evils of woman, and showing how Shakespeare's women addressed appeals made to these perceptions, in a way that can be applied to comedy's concerns with cuckoldry and unfaithfulness without much fuss.

Frye, Northrop. *A Natural Perspective*. New York: Columbia U.P., 1965. Print.

This adaptation of a lecture series done by one of the 20th century's most famous literary critics means to proclaim the romances as the logical culmination of Shakespeare's work, and especially of his comedic mode, wherein unlike other playwrights such as Ben Jonson, he creates a fantastical world that he does not mean to put forward as reality. Frye describes the structure of the general comedic proceedings to show how they develop over time to express the same sort of thing in the same sort of way through Shakespeare's career.

I found his analysis of Shakespeare's comedic structure especially relevant to my thesis. Part of what I mean to say in my work is that, in just the same way as fantastic elements of the play throw the senses of the audience and require them to awake their faith, the characters in the play must trust and wait for time to sort things out when faced with what is to them unbelievable. So in talking about this book I would consult those passages and discuss how the fantastic as

presented to the audience relates to the fantastic as presented to the characters. I also found his discussion of some of the conventions used relevant, and will include those when necessary.

Frye, Northrop. *Northrop Frye on Shakespeare*. Ed. Robert Sandler. New Haven: Yale UP, 1986. Print.

Another printed lecture series by the well-known critic, but this time with a broader focus: comedy, history, tragedy, and romance. He chronologically pursues an erudite discussion of some of Shakespeare's most popular and idiosyncratic works. Invoking a historical perspective and a sense of Elizabethan sensibilities, he puts forth well-justified statements about Shakespeare's works as a whole.

The examination of the ideas about Shakespeare expressed here in comparison with those in *A Natural Perspective*, of my own, and of other authors has helped me form a foundation on which to discuss my own ideas in this paper. But this is mostly for the general ideas he expresses. Some of his particular ideas I disagree with, but these disagreements are informative as well. I will most likely be citing it throughout to compare with the comedies I'm discussing.

Hunter, Robert Grams. *Shakespeare and the Comedy of Forgiveness*. New York: Columbia UP, 1965. Print.

This book is about exactly what it sounds like: forgiveness in Shakespeare's comedies. Hunter discusses the large role that forgiving mostly male wrongs plays in the last few non-tragic plays Shakespeare wrote, as well as a few others. It focuses heavily on the romances, and includes much of its discussion of some relevant plays, such as *Merchant of Venice* and *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, within chapters on other plays.

First of all, Shakespeare's recurrent use of forgiveness as a recurrent plot device in his comedies and romances is a widespread enough feature to merit this sort of analysis. On top of this, he uses this trend to discuss the historical context of the plays in relation to themselves and a large body of literature. The result is a compelling discussion of the religious, literary, and historical ideas at play in the works.

Masten, Jeffrey. *The Two Gentlemen of Verona: A Modern Perspective*, p. 200-221. Shakespeare, William. *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* (Folger Shakespeare Library Series). Eds. Barbara A Mowat and Paul Werstine. New York: Simon & Schuster Adult Publishing Group, 2006. Print.

In active collusion against his title, Masten offers a well-informed historical perspective on the nature, intensity, and meaning of Proteus and Valentine's friendship. Starting with the modern objections to the last scene of the play, he discusses the homosocial relationships and courtship rituals of the time to great effect, elucidating much about the meaning and implications of the events of the play.

This essay primarily helps in the introduction of my paper, but it is in the introduction because it contains some of the first iterations of ideas and techniques Shakespeare uses extensively in his comedies, and especially in the ones I'm focusing on.

Sillars, Stuart. "'You lie, you are not he': Identity, Rhetoric and Convention in Shakespeare's Art of Lying." ed. Panja, Shormishtha, and Peter De Souza. *Shakespeare and the Art of Lying*. New Delhi: Orient Blackswan, 2013. Print.

Another straightforward title graces this compilation of essays from multiple authors. Each takes a look at the purpose lying serves to characters and plots in Shakespeare's plays and other relevant works. It covers fairly even ground genre-wise among the plays.

Lying is a feature and ability of many important characters from Shakespeare's works, as a facet of Shakespeare's near-constant interest in rhetoric. Lying is one of the rhetorician's most important tools, and offers lots of material for analysis. The essays on the whole, while not revolutionary, offer good material to reference lying in several of the plays.

Sillars' work involves discussion of many other plays which I am not touching on, but touches on some of the plays I'm focusing on, namely Twelfth Night. He has an expansive, heavily cited, and detailed article focused on lying in Shakespeare, and some asides of his say quite a lot with quite a little.

Phialas, Peter G. *Shakespeare's Romantic Comedies; the Development of Their Form and Meaning*. Chapel Hill: U of North Carolina, 1966. Print.

Here again, we have an author concerned with the development of Shakespeare's comedic conventions and structure. In contrast to Frye's reflection that focuses on the romances, Phialas focuses on the earlier and middle comedies to examine the invention and initial development of Shakespeare's take on comedy as a conflict of attitudes about love, and stops at later comedies like *Twelfth Night* and *As You Like It*.

Phialas is a touch too indebted to the ideas of Viola and Rosalind as expressions of an ideal attitude, and disagreeably characterizes *Two Gents* as merely promising and not reflecting much about Shakespeare's comedies to follow, his establishment of the comedies as places where temperaments work themselves out through tribulation to an ideal state is generally sound and useful.

I'll probably consult this source a fair amount, as it professes a good understanding of the comedies, and how their events manage to change the characters implicated in them. This format may be used to talk about my framing of deceit and misunderstandings as a precursor to later love and belief in the beloved's sincerity later on.

Shakespeare, William, and David M. Bevington. The Complete Works of Shakespeare: *As You Like It*. New York: Longman, 1997. Print.

As You Like It is one of Shakespeare's best forays into the green world of the pastoral forest, wherein the order of the normal world is restored to a former glory and the unlearned and clumsy romances of Orlando and Rosalind, among others, finds its footing by losing its childish clumsiness. Like *Twelfth Night*, the major deception here is female cross-dressing.

In this green world, Shakespeare's characters begin to understand themselves and each other in a kinder and more honest manner. Orlando and Rosalind's clumsy attempts at wooing through a mask result in a solid relationship, and that mask serves as a prime part of what allows Rosalind and Orlando to be expressive in a less immature and overblown way.

While I am not as familiar with this play as I am with *Twelfth Night* and will be with *Much Ado*, I know the play and it is relevant to my thesis. My commentary will probably be restricted mostly to a few Rosalind/Orlando scenes, but they will fit well in my work.

Shakespeare, William, and David M. Bevington. The Complete Works of Shakespeare: *A Midsummer Night's Dream.* New York: Longman, 1997. Print.

Midsummer is the story of four young lovers and their escapade into the woods primarily. There, they and the rude mechanicals are tricked and drugged and confused by the fairies Oberon and Puck. The fairy magic in the play is a deceptive element that is outside of the human realm and is therefore very theatrically effective.

I will make note of this play but will not focus on it. Its use of fantastical/magical elements to deceive the main characters in an overall harmless way gets at something I think Shakespeare is trying to do in all of his comedies: make a world where weird and confusing things happen. I think that world is very important for the kind of comedy he makes.

Shakespeare, William, and David M. Bevington. The Complete Works of Shakespeare: *Much Ado about Nothing*. New York: Longman, 1997. Print.

Much Ado tells a tale of multiple romantic deceptions. Don John convinces Claudio of Hero's inconstancy at the same time as his brother Don Pedro persuades Beatrice and Benedick of their love for one another. Deception in this play is a neutral tool that cannot maintain a stance that doesn't eventually prove itself true. While Don Pedro's deception proves itself in short order, Don John's is disproved by the end of the play.

The play offers an expert comic interpretation of a story that Shakespeare would revisit often in his plays, in other forms: that of an eventually disproved fear of cuckoldry. It also contains one of Shakespeare's best written clowns in Dogberry and one of his strongest comic relationships in Beatrice and Benedick.

I plan to draw on this play very heavily throughout my thesis. Not only is it infinitely relevant to my thesis, with multiple plots involving deceit and romance, I will be in a Winedale production of it in the middle of writing my thesis. I can't understate how often I'll end up referencing this play.

Shakespeare, William, and David M. Bevington. The Complete Works of Shakespeare: *The Sonnets*. New York: Longman, 1997. Print.

Shakespeare's sonnet sequence centers on meditations about Love, Time, the variable emotions, sexuality, other people, and above all the power of poetry. The 154 sonnets use Elizabethan ideas about love and friendship masterfully to create an ever-fluctuating perspective on all the above.

Shakespeare's sonnets and comedies both, by obvious virtue, share some of the same ideas about some of the same subjects, namely romantic love, friendship, time, and worry. An analysis of the sonnets in light of my content on the comedies proves useful.

Shakespeare, William, and David M. Bevington. The Complete Works of Shakespeare: *The Tempest*. New York: Longman, 1997. Print.

This play, like *Midsummer*, uses magic to bewilder people. Though, this time, it comes from a human source. Though Prospero uses it to get what he wants for himself and his daughter, he ultimately discards it and leaves the island he is shipwrecked on for Naples.

I'll make mention of this play for sure, as a bookend to my commentary on the middle and late comedies, but I won't focus on it. It just brings more focus to how much Shakespeare valued the experience of bewilderment and the unbelievable in his writing.

Shakespeare, William, and David M. Bevington. The Complete Works of Shakespeare: *Twelfth Night: Or, What You Will*. New York: Longman, 1997. Print.

Twelfth Night is one of the most famous examples of Shakespeare's use of disguise in comedy plots. Viola disguises herself both to honor her brother and become employable, but during that time falls in love with, and gets very close to, her boss Duke Orsino. In the guise of a male friend, she is able to chastise him for his misogynistic beliefs. This incident allows him an opportunity to become reconcilable through the standard comic plot, and only worked because Viola was in disguise as a man. Additionally, the steward Malvolio and Sir Andrew is deceived into misinterpreting Olivia's straightforward disinterest in them as complex expressions of favor.

Twelfth Night is one of Shakespeare's best comedies. It uses several of Shakespeare's most common tropes skillfully and contains some of his most famous comic characters. It also presents many interesting challenges and choices on stage. Its plots offer a critique of contemporary ideas of gender roles and expectations, in wooing especially.

This play will be incredibly relevant to my thesis. What's more, I am familiar with it, through the Summer Winedale 2015 production in which I played Orsino. My experience there was one of my first inspirations for this thesis, and I plan to draw on it heavily. I also will get to see an American Shakespeare Center production of the play, which will doubtless serve as inspiration as well.

Shakespeare, William, and David M. Bevington. The Complete Works of Shakespeare: *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*. New York: Longman, 1997. Print.

Two Gents is an early comedy of Shakespeare's that showcases several story mechanics Shakespeare would revisit often in his career, like female cross dressing, the green world, and the overprotective father, among others. The play follows two old friends from the end of their boyhood to the beginning of their married lives.

While not matching his later plays in the complexity of its scenes and poetry, or in popularity, it is an entertaining play that presents many challenges to performance.

The main thing from this play I plan to include in my thesis is the letter scene, but I also want to comment on Julia's disguise and Proteus's deceits. For the most part though, it won't be a major focus of my writing. It is not talked about much in the critical writings I have found so far, so much of what I will say will be based on my own experience and on comparison with other plays and other criticisms.

Shakespeare, William, and David M. Bevington. The Complete Works of Shakespeare: *Romeo and Juliet*. New York: Longman, 1997. Print.

Romeo and Juliet is a tragedy that starts out as essentially a comedy, and because of this, casts many aspects of the comedic plot into new light, showing what happens when they go badly. The play showcases some of the most powerful love-language in Shakespeare's extensive list of romantic turns of phrases.

This play is obviously not central to my thesis as a tragedy, but its initial state as a pseudo comedy, as well as its status as an Elizabethan love story which talks about love in a way similar to how the comedies do, make it prove useful. Succinct quoting can be a means to forming a better perspective on the comedies.

Shakespeare, William, and David M. Bevington. The Complete Works of Shakespeare: *The Winter's Tale*. New York: Longman, 1997. Print.

The Winter's Tale is almost like *Much Ado* in its plot, if Claudio had festered with his fears longer before accusing Hero, and if there were lifelong consequences for his actions. Leontes is more subdued by his mistakes and the long period he spends mourning his jealous instincts gives us more credence to believe he has repented. It also adds an element of the fantastic in Hermione's unveiling.

This play is a culmination of many of the comic trends Shakespeare used – heroine in disguise (though not as a man) younger generation vs older generation, an earned comic resolution, an unbelievable deception in Hermione's feigned death. I could go on, but it'll be important for me to at least mention in my thesis in relation to the plays I'll be talking about more.

Vaughn, Jack A. *Shakespeare's Comedies*. New York: F. Ungar, 1980. Print.

Vaughn has few overarching principles in mind for this book – it is a simple, concise summation of aspects he deems important in the comedies. Each chapter talks about one play, in

chronological order, and he focuses on Shakespeare's plot construction, versification, and characterization.

The discussions of each play are short, to the point, and express fairly standard interpretations, at least from a modern perspective. The value in this book is in how concisely and simply a given passage illustrates something about a play or set of plays which a knowledgeable scholar merely couldn't rephrase more simply. There are several such passages, and I plan to use them when I can in my thesis.